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Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Friday, 17 January 1997, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. KHAN

CONTENTS

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION (*continued*)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION (continued)

Combined second and third periodic reports of Turkey (CEDAW/C/TUR/2-3)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms. Saygin and Ms. Ertürk (Turkey) took places at the Committee table.

2. The CHAIRPERSON invited the members of the Committee to consider the combined second and third periodic reports of Turkey, and noted that, owing to the late arrival of the third report, members had not had sufficient time to prepare questions and would therefore be asking a greater than usual number of questions from the floor.

3. Ms. SAYGIN (Turkey), introducing the combined second and third periodic reports of Turkey (CEDAW/C/TUR/2-3), said that she was one of the four women members of the Turkish Cabinet, where she had responsibility for women's affairs and the family. Her Government appreciated the efforts of the United Nations in setting the international agenda for the advancement of women and standards on women's rights and attached great importance to the full implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. United Nations efforts for the empowerment of women had been an inspiration for Turkish women, and she was confident that their achievements in that regard would be an inspiration for women in other parts of the world. Turkish women had been among the first in the world to achieve the right to vote and to be elected.

4. In the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women, Turkey had already formulated its national plan of action, and the Government was strengthening the national mechanism on women's affairs by upgrading the Directorate General on the Status and Problems of Women to the level of an under-secretariat. Full implementation of the Convention was on the Government's agenda, and it was hoped that Turkey would present its next periodic report as one of the States having no reservations to the Convention.

5. Ms. ERTÜRK (Turkey) said that as the twentieth century was coming to an end, it had become evident that the international community was moving towards a new world order dominated by global rather than by national standards and institutions. While those trends offered new hopes for the spread of liberty, justice and democracy, the possibilities for growing conflict and inequalities between countries, regions, ethnic groups, and between men and women, appeared to be as strong as ever. Paradoxically, there was a growing threat to hopes of creating a world of equality, development and peace, in which the status of women would be enhanced.

6. As economic polarization throughout the world became more pronounced, the emergence of new modes of struggle, based on micro-nationalism, religious fundamentalism, ethnic cleansing, racism and the like, were acquiring increased

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legitimacy. The twentieth-century values of equality, citizenship and welfare were being replaced by notions of empowerment, identity and governance. While recognition of cultural pluralism was welcome, there was a danger of becoming blind to the fine line distinguishing respect for culture from respect for individual rights, and it must be remembered that human rights had no cultural boundaries. Culture, religion, tradition and custom often were gender-biased and manifested themselves through control over women's bodies and lives.

7. States and their institutions had not been free of inadequacies and contradictions. However, it was within a "state of law" that women could seize a new opportunity through the emergence of the concept of equal citizenship. National mechanisms and the notion of equal citizenship rights provided the most workable framework in which to proceed with the struggle for gender equality.

8. With a population of nearly 70 million people, Turkey was an interesting example of the contradiction between modernization and traditionalism. It was the only secular State with a predominantly Muslim population; within the Muslim world, only Turkey had abandoned the Shariah, and women had more equality before the law in other Muslim countries. Women's status in Turkey was a complex issue; it was gratifying that women were present in some of the most critical positions in the Government, but persisting disparities were still a matter for concern. In particular, literacy measures and education for girls had particularly lagged behind; women still suffered from poor health and a high level of maternal mortality; and paid jobs were elusive, as most women were unpaid family workers or did work which was simply not acknowledged.

9. Despite obvious inadequacies in gender equality, much had been accomplished. The true dimensions of progress in that regard and the nature of the remaining obstacles could not be fully appreciated without an understanding of the inherent contradictions involved in the transformation from a multi-ethnic religious empire to a secular nation-State. Underdevelopment and the pressures of structural adjustment policies further added to the complexities. While such diversity was a source of enrichment, it also led to tensions and contradictions; some of the diversities had become a major source of conflict in determining the basic character of society.

10. Two trends were of particular relevance: religious fundamentalism and ethnic rivalry. Various political movements had been keen on recruiting women and had offered new space for their active participation, encouraging them to become involved in non-conventional activities, although not always to their advantage. The terrorist group PKK, in its armed struggle against the system, had women in its ranks; 1996 would be remembered for the PKK suicide missions in which young girls had been used. The radical religious sects had also been using women to their own ends. The long-term prospects of such ideologies were less than promising in terms of women's status. The inherent totalitarian nature of those political movements left little room for women to adopt an identity outside the boundaries set by predetermined sexist-patriarchal values.

11. Despite such risks, the inclusion and diversification of women's images in civil society enabled them to develop new strategies for controlling their own lives. Since the 1980s, the growing intensification of women's movements, the activities of governmental and non-governmental organizations and policy making

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with regard to women's issues had been quite meaningful. Women had been increasingly visible and able to act on their own initiative; strategies developed by women's groups to expand their own space had gained social momentum, with special significance for the empowerment of women as individuals, for creating gender-sensitive public opinion and for putting demands on State institutions to respond to women's issues. The creation and sustenance of a social environment which would enable the demands of various women's groups to be expressed was dependent upon the preservation of the secular social order in Turkey.

12. To respond to diverse pressures and demands, while at the same time enhancing women's basic citizenship rights, seemed to be the most arduous but urgent task facing individual women, non-governmental organizations and the Government. The report should be read and evaluated within such a perspective; it was the product of contributions from women representing different professions and organizations, and reflected the views of women themselves rather than those of a State institution. The Directorate General had long relied on such participatory methods in generating documents to reflect the status of women in Turkey.

13. One of the main elements of a comprehensive and integrated approach to combating gender inequality was a supportive legislative framework, efficient enforcement mechanisms and legal literacy. Turkey tried to promote equality of rights by committing itself to various global and regional standards. Article 10 of the Turkish Constitution provided for gender equality before the law. An egalitarian treatment of women within a legal framework had been achieved through the adoption of the Swiss Civil Code, but some of its provisions on women's issues, which had been regarded as progressive in the early 1900s, had proved to be insufficient for modern society. A commission formed of professors of civil law had been authorized by the Ministry of Justice to prepare a draft law, taking account of the international treaties to which Turkey was a party and the amendments to family law made in European countries. The commission had a gender-sensitive and gender-balanced legislative approach. It would shortly complete a bill for submission to the Grand National Assembly.

14. Since the 1980s, the women's movement had been making intensive demands for modification of the discriminatory clauses of the Turkish Criminal Code. As a result of public consensus generated through intensive campaigns, article 438 of the Criminal Code, which had provided for a reduced sentence for a rapist if the injured woman was proven to be a prostitute, had been repealed in 1990, and in that same year, one of the discriminatory articles of the Turkish Civil Code, granting the husband the right of control over the wife's professional or artistic activities, had been annulled by the Constitutional Court.

15. The Fifth Five-Year Development Plan (1985-1990) had for the first time accepted women's issues as an independent area of concern for policy and planning. Gender issues had become integral parts of subsequent development plans, and recognition of women's issues as a matter of government policy had laid the groundwork for the establishment of the Directorate General in 1990. In 1991, it had been attached directly to the Office of the Prime Minister. Despite limited resources, it had been invaluable in creating gender-sensitive agendas in the public sector, collecting funds from international organizations

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to support training and research, acting as a coordinating body for other governmental institutions and networking with non-governmental organizations.

16. Turkey had participated in all major international conferences dealing with women's issues, and had been represented by an all-female delegation at the Fourth World Conference on Women. The Beijing Platform for Action had been accepted by the Turkish Government without any reservations. Two conferences for cooperation among Eurasian women had been held in Turkey in 1995 and 1996.

17. Special measures to give priority to disadvantaged women in various spheres of life included special credit programmes to ensure the active participation of women in development by encouraging them in entrepreneurial activities and defining them as a special category to be considered for quotas in providing public housing under easy terms of payment. The expansion of such measures depended on the availability of resources as well as on the determination to achieve equality.

18. The persistence of physical violence against women in the private domain remained a real challenge and was high on the agenda of women's non-governmental organizations. Aside from anti-violence advocacy, women's organizations had provided services such as counselling, legal representation and shelter for battered women. Government institutions, however, had so far been largely ineffective in their response, and there was a lack of effective legislation to protect battered women. An attempt was under way to amend the law in order to enable legal intervention in cases of domestic violence without a formal complaint from the injured party, and the Minister of the Interior had instructed all security forces to be more receptive to cases of violence against women occurring inside or outside the home.

19. The mass media were believed to have an important influence in shaping public opinion on gender issues, and they had the potential to make a far greater contribution to the advancement of women. Owing to insufficient gender sensitivity, women's experiences, ideas and needs had been given limited attention; however, recent growth in the numbers of women professionals in media organizations had given women more opportunities to make themselves heard. In its efforts to end the projection of negative and degrading images of women, the Directorate General had supported research on all aspects of women and the media.

20. Educational materials continued to perpetuate some of the values of traditional gender relations, portraying women as wives and mothers. The National Education Council, at a meeting in 1996, had emphasized the importance of eliminating such prejudices from educational programmes and had committed itself to the development of textbooks and teaching aids free of gender stereotypes for all levels of education.

21. It was a matter of pride for Turkey that suffrage had been granted to its women in 1934, relatively early compared with many European and Middle Eastern countries. However, there were very few women members of Parliament, usually less than 2 per cent of the total, and that number had been resistant to change. The Directorate General deplored the situation and the lack of efforts to increase women's representation. Women's groups were currently devising

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strategies to remedy the situation, and there had been some improvement in women's formal political participation. Important developments in recent years included the adoption by some political parties of quotas for the representation of women, and in the 1991 general election, women's affairs had for the first time become a prominent issue in all the major parties' campaigns and programmes. The Motherland Party, in power since 1983, had made women's issues one of the seven major elements of its campaign and had announced that it would implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. More unexpectedly, the religious Welfare Party had also recognized the need to address women voters in order to increase its electoral strength.

22. After the 1991 elections, a coalition of the Social Democratic People's Party and the True Path Party had established a State ministry responsible for women's affairs and family and social services, which was headed by a woman minister. Feminist activists and academicians were on its staff. Women's issues and the female vote had acquired even greater importance in 1993, with the election of Turkey's first woman Prime Minister, Tansu Çiller. There were currently four women ministers in the Cabinet - a Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Minister of the Interior and the State Ministers responsible for the Treasury and women's affairs. The increased role of women in the successful campaign of the religious Welfare Party was of dubious benefit, however, since it subjected women to a restrictive ideology.

23. Despite a significant drop in the rate of female illiteracy in the past decade, one third of Turkish women were still unable to read. Gender disparity in literacy rates was even greater in the rural areas. At the Fourth World Conference on Women, her Government had made a commitment to achieve full literacy for its female population by the year 2000. While school enrolment for boys and girls was roughly equal at the primary school level, the number of female students in secondary schools and institutions of higher learning had dropped sharply. The disparity was more acute in the less developed regions of the country. Moreover, religious vocational schools, which had increased their female enrolment, reinforced traditional female roles and failed to prepare female students for employment in the modern world.

24. The percentage of women in higher education had increased; currently, women represented one third of the total enrolment. Female students tended to study traditionally female subjects; however, the number of women in medical school and engineering programmes had risen. Women's studies and research centres had been established at a number of universities, in many cases with funds provided through the Directorate General from a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) project. Vocational training and literacy courses were also offered to large numbers of women through informal education programmes, and radio and television were used to provide education to rural women.

25. Effective measures to increase women's access to jobs with social benefits and to train them for jobs as skilled and semi-skilled workers had not yet been taken. Women's participation in the workforce had decreased from the already low figure of 34 per cent in 1990 to 30 per cent in 1995. The vast majority of them were working as unpaid family workers in the agricultural sector. In the non-agricultural and non-rural sectors, women were employed in typically female

sectors, such as textiles and the food industry. The urban unemployment rate for women was more than double that of men. Most women from low-income households were employed in the urban informal sector, which did not provide legal and social protection and benefits. That situation was aggravated by the globalization process, which reduced the possibilities for expanding permanent and secure jobs in the domestic and international labour markets.

26. Nonetheless, there was a positive correlation between women's education and their employment, and women professionals were well represented in academia, medicine, dentistry and law. Within those professions, however, women were confined to less prestigious positions. Similarly, they were well-represented in public administration, but held mainly low and middle management positions. The Directorate General was sponsoring projects to improve employment opportunities for women by, inter alia, encouraging low-income women to start their own small businesses; however, it had not been possible to resolve problems in obtaining credit or to overcome cultural constraints which prevented women from engaging in non-traditional activities. The Directorate General was also promoting the adoption of new legal and administrative measures on maternity. Currently, both the Labour Law and the Civil Servants Law contained protective clauses concerning maternity-related matters.

27. Although gender inequality in the area of health was not pronounced in Turkey, women's health was affected by domestic violence, poverty, economic dependency, and limited power to control their own sexual and reproductive capacities, particularly in the rural areas. Lack of education, fatalism, regional disparities in the distribution of health services, unequal access to existing health services and women's low status led to high maternal mortality rates. Abortion was legal, however. The Ministry of Health was focusing greater attention on women's mental health, which had been largely neglected in the past, by considering women's health as a totality rather than solely in terms of reproductive health and family planning. Following the Beijing Conference, the Ministry of Health was also attempting to involve men in reproductive health and family planning matters.

28. Like many third world countries, Turkey had witnessed the "feminization of agriculture" in the past century. Most women were unpaid workers on small family plots. Women from poorer or landless households did wage work, and women also contributed to agricultural activity by organizing labour and resource exchange groups. Their contribution, however, was not reflected in statistics and policy-making. While modern technology had reduced their daily domestic chores, the male migration and an increase in the production of labour-intensive cash crops had increased their work on the farm. However, their access to such vital resources as credit, training and extension services remained severely limited.

29. Although the idea of women in development had been accepted since the late 1980s, policy makers did not yet view women as active and integral components of development. Development projects for women rarely went beyond conventional home economics or income-generating activities, mainly in handicrafts. The involvement of non-governmental organizations in rural development was limited as well. Nonetheless, academics, decision-makers and development agents were designing effective models for women in development. The most concentrated

rural development initiative was taking place in south-eastern Turkey, where projects were being carried out to overcome regional underdevelopment by introducing community centres which offered training in specific skills. A regional rural women's conference, held in the city of Sanliurfa in November 1996, had been attended by 80 women from Turkish-, Kurdish- and Arabic-speaking villages. Early forced marriages, bride price, polygamy and lack of employment opportunities had been discussed. Another workshop on awareness-building and initiatives to combat honour killings would be held in March.

30. Turkey had entered reservations to article 15, paragraphs 2 and 4, and article 16, paragraphs 1 (c), (d), (f) and (g) of the Convention, maintaining that they were at variance with the provisions of the Turkish Civil Code concerning marriage and family life. According to that Code, the husband was legally empowered to represent the conjugal union; the husband chose the domicile and provided for the maintenance of his wife and children; and the wife acquired the husband's surname and was responsible for household management. Parental authority over children was shared by both parents, but in case of dispute, the husband's view prevailed. Although the law stipulated separation of property, in practice property acquired during marriage was registered in the husband's name. That meant that women who divorced could not make any legal claim to the property. A draft law proposing a revision of the Civil Code addressed a number of the discriminatory clauses she had mentioned. The draft law would, inter alia, enable women to use their own surnames and would allow each spouse to represent the conjugal union and jointly determine the conjugal home. Under the proposed revision, property acquired during the marriage would be shared equally by the spouses. Once the draft law had been enacted, Turkey would withdraw its reservations to the Convention.

Article 1

31. Replying to the questions contained in document CEDAW/C/1997/CRP.1/Add.4, she reiterated with regard to article 1 of the Convention, that the provisions of the Civil Code she had just mentioned regulating marriage and family life were under review. Replying to questions concerning the Criminal Code, she said that the Turkish Criminal Code differentiated between rape of minors, rape of adults and rape that violated virginity. To the extent that the penalty for rape was different in the case of the violation of virginity, the law was discriminatory. Similarly, a distinction was made with regard to the abduction of single versus married women; the penalty was heavier for abduction of the latter. The penalty was reduced if the abduction was committed with the intention of marriage, regardless of the woman's wishes.

32. Articles 440 and 441 defined adultery differently for men and women. The sentence for acts of murder incited by adultery was more lenient; that had major implications for violence against women. Article 441 had recently been annulled by the Constitutional Court, and the legislature had one year to replace it. The decision was based on the fact that, under the Turkish Constitution, international treaties carried the force of law. All international treaties entered into force the day they were promulgated in the Official Gazette and were referred to extensively by the Constitutional Court and higher courts, such as the Council of State. In its recent annulment of article 441 on adultery, the Constitutional Court had made direct reference to the Convention on the

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Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Women's groups held conflicting views on adultery: Islamic women's groups advocated strict but equal punishment, while some other groups did not even consider it a crime.

33. Under the Labour Code, an employer had the right to terminate a female worker's contract without notice at the end of paid maternity leave. All discriminatory clauses of Turkish law were under review, and draft revised laws had been prepared. The draft laws were not a high priority in the Parliament; however, the State ministry responsible for women's affairs and the family was promoting them.

Article 2

34. There had been two attempts to establish an under-secretariat for women's affairs and social services by statutory decree, in 1993 and 1996, respectively. However, both the statutory decrees and the laws authorizing them had been annulled by the Constitutional Court for technical reasons. Under the direction of the current Minister, Ms. Saygin, a draft law had been prepared to ensure the re-establishment of the under-secretariat. It had already been signed by the Cabinet Ministers and referred to a special commission of the Parliament for review.

35. The Criminal Code was being redrafted by a commission of experts established by the Ministry of Justice; it would present the results of its work to the Cabinet in March. The draft law must be adopted by the Cabinet before it could be submitted to the Parliament. A similar review of the Civil Code was being carried out by a commission of the Ministry of Justice. Apparently, the commission had completed most of its work, and draft legislation was expected to be submitted to the Cabinet in the near future. The process had taken a very long time because the commission had reviewed and, where appropriate, updated not only the articles of the Civil Code related to gender discrimination, but all the other articles as well.

Article 3

36. The Department of Statistics on Social Structure and Women, established in 1993, compiled gender-based statistics. The Department was in the process of improving its methods of data collection and was developing a computerized national network of gender-disaggregated data. The existing database was widely accessible.

37. The Directorate General was attached to the Prime Minister's Office and operated under the mandate of the State Ministry, reflecting the Government's commitment to the advancement of women. However, the Directorate had a staff of only 45 and was allocated only 0.004 per cent of the national budget. It was a separate unit, distinct from the women's unit under the Ministry of Labour and Social Security. The Ministry of Labour, in its coordinating capacity, was responsible for establishing an inter-ministerial network in order to mainstream gender issues in sectoral plans. In that connection, the Directorate General worked closely with the relevant entities in other ministries.

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38. As currently structured, the Directorate General was a centralized body with no regional or local unit. Local units would be established after the law concerning the under-secretariat was enacted. Women had been at the head of the Directorate General since its inception. Thus far, the Directorate General had financed over 30 research projects carried out by non-governmental organizations, academicians and other research groups that championed women's issues. In 1996, under the coordination of the Directorate General, four commissions of non-governmental organizations had been established with a view to preparing plans and policies for the advancement of Turkish women in the areas of law, education, employment and health. The Directorate General had also provided substantial financial support to the Purple Roof Shelter Foundation.

Article 4

39. While Turkey did not have a formal affirmative action policy as such, a quota system had been adopted by the Social Democratic People's Party (SHP) and its successor, the Republican People's Party (CHP), and the True Path Party (DYD). Although the ministry responsible for women's affairs and family had repeatedly expressed its commitment in principle to the adoption of a policy of temporary affirmative action and equal status, such a policy was yet to be implemented. Since Kurds were one of numerous ethnic groups found in Turkey, none of which held a legal minority status, there were no special programmes for Kurdish women. However, they benefited from special policies and programmes for the eradication of regional underdevelopment and population displacement in south-eastern Turkey, identified as one of the priority regions for development.

Article 5

40. Under Turkish criminal law, virginity examinations were required in all allegations of rape; however, in the case of a minor, such examinations required the consent of her parents, while in the case of a major, her own consent must be granted. Virginity examinations must be conducted by the State medical examiner. However, despite the fact that virginity was an important value in Turkish society, the public seemed to be strongly against any coerced virginity examinations. There was no legal framework to deal with women who were found to be non-virgins upon marriage. The consequences might be quite detrimental for the women, ranging from shame to divorce in rural areas, while in urban areas it was a non-issue.

41. There were no formal measures to discourage sexual harassment. However, the issue had been given a high priority on the agenda of feminist activists and non-governmental organizations, who had been campaigning and staging public protests since the 1980s. In that regard, the World Bank, through the Directorate General, was currently sponsoring a research project on gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace. The largest trade union in Turkey, Turk-is, had published a guidebook entitled "Sexual harassment at the workplace" in September 1996.

42. The State Minister responsible for women's affairs had entered into an agreement with the Ministry of Education to include the concept of women's human

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rights in the curricula of the human rights courses to be taught in primary schools starting from the 1997/1998 school year.

43. The most important measures that had been taken to ensure that women and men condemned domestic violence against women were the proposed changes to the Criminal Code, articles 456, 457 and 478. There was a need for legislation specifically addressing violence against women. The media had programmes addressing domestic violence and extensive research financed by UNDP through the Directorate General, was being undertaken on the nature of such violence, while non-governmental organizations systematically launched campaigns and protests condemning violence against women.

44. The trail for women to become district governors had been blazed in the late 1980s by a young female candidate who had successfully challenged the traditional status quo in court on the grounds that it violated the principle of equality enshrined in the Constitution. Presently, three of the 806 district governors were women.

45. There were no special measures to prevent the harassment of violence against or coercion of women that resulted in their becoming prostitutes. Incitement to prostitution, on the other hand, was regulated by article 435 of the Criminal Code. The severity of the punishment, imprisonment ranging from six months to three years as well as a fine, differed according to the age of the person coerced into prostitution. In 1990, there had been 1,897 cases of rape and molestation of women, while by 1994 that number had dropped to 1,318. Eight hundred and fifty-four men had been convicted for the kidnapping of girls in 1990, compared to 604 in 1994.

46. In a survey on Turkish women in the 1990s, commissioned by the Directorate General, 18 per cent of the women interviewed claimed that they had been beaten by their husbands. Another survey of rural women in 1995 had found that 76 per cent of women who lived in villages were beaten by their husbands, and that the principal cause of beating was disobedience to the husband (39 per cent). Unfortunately, the present legislation could not effectively protect women from domestic violence. Furthermore, it was difficult for women exposed to such violence to pursue their rights. Charges could only be brought against a spouse if the injured party filed a formal complaint, which required her to show witnesses and to undergo a medical examination. Moreover, most prison sentences were for only seven days. In that regard, a draft law had been submitted to amend article 478. In response to demands from women's rights groups, the newly elected woman Minister of the Interior had recently promulgated a decree requesting the police to treat women who had been subjected to violence with care. There was no practice of genital mutilation, nor any reported incidences of violence perpetrated to enforce religiously based dress codes. There was no systematic violence perpetrated against women of minority groups.

47. The meeting in 1995 between the Directorate General and the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation remained an isolated event. However, it had resulted in a daily television programme directed to women living in south-eastern Turkey, which covered a wide range of issues from domestic violence to employment. In the context of increasing women's consciousness, women's

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programmes in general had expanded their range of interest beyond homemaking. The media had contributed to counteracting the stereo-typical portrayals of a woman Prime Minister and party leader since 1993. While there were many women in the media, most of them were junior level executives or professionals; in 1990, only 5 per cent of the executives of the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation were women. All the activities of the Directorate General were aimed at women's empowerment and the modification of discriminatory attitudes towards women. However, thus far, such programmes had not been systematically evaluated.

48. The Directorate General recommended and worked in cooperation with the Ministry of Education to eliminate the stereotypical presentation of women and girls in school textbooks. One of the decisions which had been reached at the fifteenth National Education Council meeting held in Ankara in 1996, had been to eliminate gender-based prejudices and stereotypes from educational programmes, books and messages.

49. There were no family education courses as such. However, women's studies centres at the universities had training courses aimed at promoting gender equality. Measures to eliminate violence against women had been described in Turkey's report under article 6 by mistake.

50. There were four shelters for victims of domestic violence, one in Ankara, financed by member fees and contributions; two in Istanbul, one of which was financed by member fees, the State ministry for women's affairs, and contributions and funds from international sources, and the other by the municipality; and the fourth in Izmir, financed by the municipality. There were also 12 State shelters for women.

51. The women's studies centres had been very active in carrying out activities aimed at sensitizing the public at large. Noteworthy among their activities were education programmes for women in political parties, trade unions and voluntary women's associations, on their legal rights, consciousness and advocacy skills. Ankara University had a special programme for self-help against sexism.

52. Incidents of "honour killings" collective acts within traditional tribal, social formations - where families decided to persecute a girl or woman who had dishonoured the family, or where the woman or her relatives killed an illegitimate infant - were rare. Article 453 of the Criminal Code provided for four to eight years' imprisonment for the former and 5 to 10 years' imprisonment for the latter. Such killings had lately been attracting national interest, due mostly to the successful campaigns waged by women's groups to focus the media's attention on the issue. More effective measures to eliminate the practice altogether were expected.

53. Men who kidnapped a minor were liable to 5 to 10 years' imprisonment, while abduction of an adult was punishable by 3 to 10 years' imprisonment. Punishment for the abduction of a married woman was not less than seven years' imprisonment. The concept of rape within marriage did not exist under Turkish criminal law. The Directorate General and women's groups were pressing for the introduction of an article that would penalize rape within marriage as a crime

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under the Criminal Code. Article 423/1 of the Code did not relate to rape per se, but rather to the violation of virginity. Under that article, a man who promised marriage to a girl older than 15 in order to seduce her was liable to six months to two years' imprisonment. If he married her, the case and punishment were deferred. However, if, within five years, a decision for divorce was reached by the court because the husband was found guilty, a public suit would be initiated, and if a sentence had been handed down before, it would be enforced.

Article 6

54. Disaggregated data on prostitution were not available. No special measures existed to protect women from prostitution and its attendant risks. Registered prostitutes were subject to periodic health examinations in State hospitals. Brothels were regulated by Law No. 1593 on general hygiene. The penalty for being a procurer was specified under article 435; it was not less than two years' imprisonment if the person lured into prostitution was younger than 15. If the procurer was a relative, the penalty was not less than three years. For persons between the ages of 15 and 21, the penalty ranged from six months to two years in addition to a fine. If the procurer was a relative, the penalty was not less than two years in addition to a fine. In the case of persons over 21, the penalty was between six months and two years. If the prostitute or the trafficker was a foreigner, he or she was immediately deported, and testimony was not sought. Prostitutes had less access to health care and job training than other women, and the attitude of the police was condescending towards them. There were no formal rehabilitation programmes for prostitutes.

55. Many Turkish women emigrated; indeed, 45 per cent of the roughly 1.9 million Turks who had emigrated to Germany were women. Most women emigrants were married women who followed their husbands. However, there were some single professional and educated women who emigrated for better economic opportunities. Cultural norms, strong family ties and strict controls over women's sexuality prevented Turkish women from falling victim to trafficking networks.

Article 7

56. Former Prime Minister Çiller had appointed one woman to her Cabinet. As the Deputy Prime Minister under the current Government, she had appointed four women to ministerial portfolios. There was no women's caucus in the Parliament. After the last election, 13 of the 550 parliamentarians were women, representing 2.4 per cent of the total. Turkey had a proportional representation system. There were no explicit government initiatives to promote women to decision-making posts in the political sector.

57. Non-governmental organizations were financed through membership fees, donations, international sources and State support. There were no data on non-governmental organizations receiving State support, and there were no set criteria for such support, except that some non-governmental organizations were designated as catering to the "public good", in which case they got certain tax exemptions. Applications for that status were evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Political parties continued to maintain the quota system for women's

representation in their administrative organs. Journalists' rights were protected by laws regulating the press.

Article 8

58. Formally, the same criteria were applied in the recruitment and promotion of male and female foreign service personnel. Female foreign service personnel could, with the permission of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, marry foreigners without incurring professional consequences. However, since thus far, no female foreign service staff had indicated their desire to marry a foreigner, the consequences of such a marriage were not known.

Article 9

59. While the relation between article 9 of the Convention and article 19 of the Turkish Citizenship Law might seem to be in conflict, since only the woman could lose her citizenship by way of marriage to an alien, the Turkish law neither rendered the woman stateless nor changed her nationality automatically. There were no exceptions to that provision of the Turkish Citizenship Law, which was not under review. The Republic of Turkey's position with respect to its reservation to article 9 remained unchanged.

Article 10

60. Compulsory education had been increased from five to eight years. The Ministry of Education was taking measures to prepare the infrastructure to ensure the systematic implementation of the new law. Illiteracy still affected 28.03 per cent of the total female population aged six years and older, and that percentage was as high as 49.35 per cent in the east and south-east. Turkey had taken several measures to meet its commitment under the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action to eradicate illiteracy by the year 2000. To that end, the Directorate General had supported the establishment of a non-governmental organization commission on education, which had prepared a television programme offering a series of literacy courses. The Ministry of Education was also launching a massive literacy campaign throughout the country as part of its adult education programme.

61. The eastern and south-eastern regions had been identified as priorities for special integrated development projects, such as literacy campaigns and the promotion of health services and training in income-generating skills for women. While compulsory education applied to both sexes, in practice there was gender bias, and educational materials continued to portray gender-biased stereotypes. Nevertheless, government efforts were under way to develop curricula and adopt teaching materials free of such stereotypes for all levels of education. Graduate programmes in women's and gender studies were available at three universities, and six universities had women's centres.

Article 11

62. Under the Constitution the State adopted measures to promote peaceful industrial relations. Workers had the right to establish unions and to strike, and gender-based discrimination was prohibited in jobs of the same nature.

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63. There was, however, differing treatment, in the guise of protective legislation, as some jobs were deemed to be physically strenuous for women. The Government took the view that women and men working with equal opportunities in equal positions created an environment of cooperation, with positive implications for the workplace and the home.

64. The minimum age for employment was 12 years of age. Of the 18 per cent of girls in the 12-14 age group in employment, almost 90 per cent were in rural areas, largely as family agricultural workers. The Labour Code forbade the employment of girls at any age in certain industries, and the Government had accepted all the International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions on child labour. Turkey had made major efforts to implement the ILO International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour.

65. Civil Servants Law No.65, covered all government employees in white-collar jobs, whereas the Labour Code covered blue-collar workers in both the State and private sectors.

66. Maternity leave was available to all female workers, and there was also provision for paternity leave. The Government did not have current plans to reactivate its earlier draft legislation on job security, and no specific steps had been taken to address attitudes in connection with occupational segregation in the workforce. Approximately 68 per cent of the labour force was unionized, with 40 per cent of women workers unionized.

67. Equal pay for equal work was ensured, and the concept of equal pay for equal value was acknowledged, although there were deficiencies in its implementation. No specific measures had been taken to promote women into management positions. Under the Labour Code, workplaces with 100-150 women workers must establish nursing rooms and day nurseries, but such measures were not sufficient and workers could face hardship. Generally, women and men working in family enterprises in any sector were not compensated financially.

68. Sexual harassment was only now coming to public attention, and there were few specific measures, although there was some trade-union guidance in that regard.

Article 12

69. With regard to maternal and infant mortality, induced abortion contributed to curtailing maternal deaths. National targets and strategies had been defined to improve mother and child care and family planning services and individual hospitals also had health programmes for women.

70. While there was no legal requirement for a woman to seek her husband's consent for access to health services, such consent was required for abortion, although single women could make their own choice.

71. The National Council for acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) was attached to the Prime Minister's office because of its importance. AIDS was not widespread, and government programmes, including the establishment of a hotline

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and information and training programmes were under way to promote women's awareness of the disease.

72. While men in Turkey generally participated in family planning programmes, they had traditionally been less targeted than women.

Article 13

73. Women had free access to information on family planning and sexually transmitted diseases.

74. Substance abuse was not common, and no desegregated data were available. There was only one treatment centre for rehabilitating drug addicts, but rehabilitation was also provided in hospitals.

75. The National Programme for the Enhancement of Women's Integration in Development was co-sponsored by UNDP and the Government, and aimed to establish a gender disaggregated database, promote human resources capacity on gender issues and create an interministerial network on women's issues and supporting non-governmental organization activities. The project had supported the establishment of women's studies centres, and had led to the compilation of relevant data. Pilot projects supported under the programme had also produced information on various issues such as portrayal of women in the media. A documentary film on the status of women and a profile of women trade unionists had been supported. A micro-enterprises project had revealed that the fundamental problem in promoting small-scale female entrepreneurship was access to, rather than lack of, funds, and appropriate training programmes were now being carried out. Efforts were also under way to provide a rotating fund and credit guarantees.

76. There were no legal or social barriers preventing women from participating in sporting or recreational activities at any level.

Article 14

77. The social pension fund for the agricultural sector addressed mainly men, although women could subscribe as heads of families, which meant widows and divorcees in practice.

78. Production-oriented agricultural extension programmes were delivered by men, and women were responsible for home economics activities, since male agents tended to be trained in technical areas and female agents in economics.

79. International conventions and national measures enshrining women's rights were not easily disseminated among rural women, although the Directorate General had supported the issuance of a non-governmental organization booklet on women's rights, and special measures needed to be developed.

80. The midwife system had become outdated, but there was no satisfactory replacement. Health centres provided services in rural areas, but in general the health care infrastructure was poor. National health insurance for the poor had been adopted for rural and urban dwellers.

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81. As to whether women agricultural workers were compensated, women working in family-based operations were not compensated, as such work was considered part of household responsibilities, but women in poor households engaged in paid work, which was seen as an indication of poverty and low status. There was a general inequality between the sexes in rural wages.

Articles 15 and 16

82. Women had an equal right of ownership of property, but the Civil Code allowed agricultural enterprises run as a single unit to be allocated to an inheritor - generally a son - with the capability to run the enterprise. Legally, women had autonomous control over their income, but social practices prevented many women from enjoying the fruits of their employment.

83. Measures were in hand to bring the Civil Code fully into line with articles 15 and 16 of the Convention. A current draft amendment allowed each spouse to represent the conjugal union and jointly determine the conjugal home, while enabling women to use their own surnames and share property acquired during the duration of the marriage equally in case of divorce.

84. The legal age for marriage was 18, and could in extraordinary circumstances be lowered to 14. There was a negligible incidence of marriage below those already low ages. Religious marriage was not legally recognized, and a religious ceremony was allowed only after a civil wedding. Infringement was punishable.

85. Women's groups were coordinating efforts to revise the Civil Code, and it was such groups, rather than society at large, which exerted pressure on legislators.

86. The Civil Code defined women as being responsible for household management, including taking care of children. Women enjoyed all legal rights accorded to heads of household.

87. In the absence of claims by male heirs, a daughter inheriting land deemed indivisible did not need to demonstrate the ability to manage it properly. Land was in fact routinely inherited by women, and there was a tradition of women with large landholdings.

88. There were no programmes to let women know before marriage that a separation of matrimonial property regime existed. Cases where that system did not apply were the result of social and economic tradition. Legislation to ensure that women did not lose their property owing to divorce was pending.

89. The Beijing Platform for Action had been adopted without any reservations, and Turkey had set forth political commitments in three basic areas: changing gender-biased legislative provisions and removing all reservations to the Convention; increasing compulsory education from five to eight years and eradicating illiteracy by the year 2000; and reducing infant and mortality rates by at least half by the year 2000.

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90. Considerable progress had already been made, including preparation of a national plan covering all areas of concern in the Platform for Action. In accordance with the Platform, all ministries were to review policies and programmes from a gender perspective, and formulation of a high-level coordination committee was under way. Further, the Platform had been translated and disseminated, the Directorate General had organized awareness-raising seminars, and efforts were under way to ensure full and equal access by women to health and family planning services, to increase literacy levels and to promote income-generating activities in south-eastern Anatolia.

91. The preparation of the national plan was a concrete step towards implementation of the Platform for Action and fulfilment of the Government's commitments.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.

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Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

Sixteenth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 319th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Friday, 17 January 1997, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Ms. KHAN

CONTENTS

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION (*continued*)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION (continued)

Combined second and third periodic reports of Turkey (CEDAW/C/TURK/2-3, CEDAW/C/1997/CRP.1/Add.4)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms. Ertürk and Ms. Saygin (Turkey) took places at the Committee table.

General questions

2. Ms. SCHÖPP-SCHILLING said that the frank and thorough written and oral presentations showed a great deal of commitment by the Turkish delegation to progress and reform. Among her main areas of concern were the conflicting demands of the various social and cultural groups making up Turkish society, which must be viewed from the perspective of the human rights instruments to which Turkey was part. Accommodating those groups should not be seen as giving in to demands, but as observing international commitments.

3. Given the separation of religion and the State in Turkey, she would like to know the extent to which the religious leanings of one of the coalition partners of the current Government were seen as a threat to that separation. Furthermore, there was a discrepancy between the situation of well-educated women from the urban middle class and poor and often uneducated rural women, who were forced by their male kinsmen into traditional roles determined by Islamic patriarchy, and she wondered what the Government was doing to elevate the status of the latter group. In general, despite extensive efforts in many fields, the missing element seemed to be a systematic effort to end their isolation and marginalization.

4. It was troubling to her that financing for Government efforts for the advancement of women came mostly from international sources and was not an integral part of the State budget. She had not heard any specific targets, goals or timetables for the implementation of the national Plan of Action for Women which had been based on the Beijing Platform for Action. It was not clear whether the Plan of Action had been adopted by the Cabinet or discussed in Parliament, and whether budget resources had been set aside for its implementation. Pilot plans and projects were useful, but unless they became part of institutional structures, their success was not guaranteed.

5. Ms. BUSTELO GARCÍA DEL REAL said that, although it was noteworthy that a Directorate General on the Status and Problems of Women had been established, it appeared that there was a lack of political will and support in the Government and Parliament to provide it with adequate financial resources and no real desire to include it in policy-making. The National Plan of Action for women was being based on the Beijing Platform for Action, but basing it on the Convention would lend it greater legal validity. The report had said little about efforts to translate and disseminate the Convention, and she would welcome

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more information on that subject. The Committee's General Recommendations 19 on violence against women and 21 on equality within the family might be helpful in legal reform efforts.

6. What happened in Turkey was of great importance to other women throughout the world. It might be useful to develop closer ties to the European Union, which could provide assistance and support to programmes for the advancement of women.

7. Ms. CORTI paid tribute to the support the Government of Turkey had long shown for the Convention, most recently during the series of major international conferences and summits. However, she also had the impression that there was no continuity in policy towards women's issues. In a deeply traditional society it was certainly difficult to address such issues, yet in recent years there had been a regression from the tremendous advances which Turkish women had made earlier in the twentieth century. For example, in 1995 a major meeting had been held on attitudes towards women in the communications media, but it had been an isolated event to which there had been no follow-up.

8. She would like more information on the proposal to establish a Secretariat of States for Women's Issues by decree, since its establishment by law would give it a more solid foundation.

9. In her view, priority should be placed on the images of women as portrayed in the mass media. Since those images reached so many people, changing them could actually affect social practices.

10. Ms. AOUIJ said that Turkey had chosen total separation of religion and the State, which had led to the passage of many positive laws and the advancement of women and the people of Turkey in general. Men and women had equal status, at least in law. Currently, however, in a climate of violence, intolerance and instability, Turkish society was being torn by a hard-line Islamic movement which had become integrated into such State structures as the army and the Ministries of Education and the Interior. That movement, which was supported by the lower classes, had taken advantage of democratization and used that process to its own end. Its goals were first to gain political power, then to attack the status of women, who were viewed as inferior beings who should have no role in public life.

11. Since Turkey had ratified the Convention in 1985, it had taken no measures to bring the law into conformity with the Convention and none of the many reservations had been lifted. A husband was still considered the head of the household, and such practices as virginity examinations and "honour killings" were cause for grave concern. She also noted the growing climate of violence against girls and women and increasing disparity between boys and girls in education. Those conditions would provide fertile ground for an Islamic fundamentalist movement. At a time when human rights should be a priority for any democratic State, those practices represented a violation of human dignity which the Committee could not accept. Religion should be a matter of conscience, not of law or of force.

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12. Islam was a great religion, and the first major religion to give women their rights; thus, it could provide no pretext for the oppression of women. At any rate, cultural identity could not be used to legitimize violations of human rights. She asked what strategies the Government had devised to help women retain the advances they had achieved and how it intended to counter the fundamentalist movement. Participation of women in political and economic decision-making was very important because it would allow them to know and protect their rights. It was time for Turkey, a country of major strategic importance, to take vigorous measures to protect the progress its women had achieved.

13. Ms. FERRER GÓMEZ said that she would like to know if there was a specific deadline for the necessary reforms to the Criminal and Civil codes for implementation of the National Plan of Action for women. She was concerned at the serious situation of domestic violence against women and girls, and noted that measures such as investigation and establishing women's shelters had been taken, but the problem appeared to be deeper and more pervasive. It was very difficult to transform deeply rooted images and prejudices, and integrated plans to change the cultural patterns determining such social practices would be needed. She would also welcome more information on the situation of minority women with regard to the Convention and their level of political participation and education.

14. The CHAIRPERSON, speaking in her personal capacity, said that during the 1920s and 1930s, Turkey had been among the most progressive countries in the world in the field of women's rights. However, most of Turkey's reservations to the Convention followed the pattern of Islamic religious law or Shariah, which was surprising in a secular country; furthermore, not all of its reservations were actually in conformity with its own Constitution. For example, laws still existed whereby all marital property was registered under the husband's name, the husband could choose the family domicile, thus limiting women's economic independence, and by law, a wife must take her husband's surname. She would like to learn more about Government measures to remove the reservations to the Convention.

Article 2

15. Ms. JAVATE DE DIOS took note of the positive efforts being made to eliminate violations of the Convention still found in the Labour Code and the Civil Code. The delegation of Turkey had mentioned that all reservations to the Convention would be eliminated by the year 2000, but she wondered whether that target was realistic and how political support to deal with the backlash against such action would be gathered. More information on any systematic plan of action or timetable to reach that goal would be welcome.

16. Ms. OUEDRAOGO asked whether the Directorate General on the Status and Problems of Women was responsible for coordination, and if so how coverage of regions and provinces was being ensured.

17. She asked whether non-governmental organizations working for the advancement of women enjoyed the necessary freedom; it was reported by well-informed sources that a non-governmental organization which had organized a

campaign to combat violence against women had been subjected to deterrence in Istanbul.

18. Ms. SHALEV said that, in relation to article 2 (d), it was indicated in paragraph 13 of the oral replies that violation of virginity in acts of rape was an aggravating factor under criminal law; yet article 423/1 of the Criminal Code (para. 33 of the oral replies) made no mention of violation of virginity. She asked why virginity examinations were required in all allegations of rape (para. 13 of the oral replies), since forced examinations were likely to deter rape victims from taking legal action. It made no sense to conduct forced gynaecological examinations in the case of investigations of illegal prostitution, since lack of virginity proved nothing, and such examinations were discriminatory.

19. Referring to reports of forced gynaecological examinations on political detainees, and on women in state hospitals, supposedly to avoid future allegations of sexual abuse by the police or hospital staff, she said that it was clear that all the codes of virginity and chastity were discriminatory in that they addressed only women's sexual conduct and were a means of controlling women and excluding them from public life. Yet those codes were very pervasive in Turkish culture. She asked what the Turkish Government had done to investigate reports of virginity examinations, whether it had issued clear directives to law enforcement personnel that such examinations were not allowed, and whether it had educated judges to deal with allegations of forced gynaecological examinations. Also, and in connection with article 2 (e), she asked whether the Turkish Government had considered providing human rights training for health care professionals, who needed to be aware that every person, male or female, had the right, under all circumstances, to refuse to undergo medical examination.

20. Referring to paragraph 20 of the oral replies, she said that women prisoners who complained of rape or sexual abuse should be allowed immediate examinations for the purposes of gathering evidence, not to determine virginity. She asked whether the Turkish Government had investigated allegations of sexual abuse of political detainees during interrogation and violations of rights to due process, and whether it had established mechanisms to ensure effective investigation of such complaints and the imposition of appropriate penalties, and to guarantee the right to medical care for political detainees.

21. On article 2 (f), the section of the Criminal Code referring to violence against women was clearly concerned with offenses against morality, or against family or male honour, rather than against women. It was indicated in paragraph 32 of the oral replies that there was no concept of marital rape in Turkish criminal law, and paragraph 29 referred to honour killings as mitigating circumstances in sentencing. Yet the crime of rape was a crime against the dignity and integrity of women and, in the case of honour killings, against their very right to life. Lack of consent by the woman should be the core definition of rape; the Turkish Government should consider gender-sensitive training for judges and law enforcement officials and should review the relevant articles of the Criminal Code.

22. In connection with article 12, it was indicated in paragraph 69 of the oral replies that a married women needed her husband's consent to have an abortion; that was a violation of article 15 of the Convention, and an infringement of women's autonomy and of their right to equality before the law.

Article 4

23. Ms. SCHÖPP-SCHILLING said that the report described a few isolated examples of affirmative action, but there were massive discrepancies within the law and between the de jure and de facto situation; the Turkish Government needed to take a systematic approach towards affirmative action. She asked what opposition there was to affirmative action, by whom and on what grounds, and whether the programme of action based on the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women contained a systematic commitment to institutionalize affirmative action in Turkey.

24. Ms. JAVATE DE DIOS asked how many women had benefited from the special credit programmes, whether the programmes were available to both urban and rural women, especially the most impoverished women, how many women had benefited from the special housing quota, and whether women in the informal sector were covered by that programme. She asked whether the Turkish Government was considering any quota systems to accelerate the appointment of women to Government positions, especially at decision-making levels.

Article 5

25. Ms. SCHÖPP-SCHILLING asked whether there was a national policy to establish women's studies programmes or professorships at universities, or whether the existence of women's studies depended on the efforts of isolated professors, and whether the findings of research on women's issues were being integrated into credit courses at universities.

26. Ms. ESTRADA CASTILLO said that the report showed that prejudice against women persisted and that stereotypes were deeply rooted in society and, even more alarmingly, in the consciousness of women. Although the report and oral presentation demonstrated a frank recognition of the problems, no measures or specific projects were proposed which corresponded to their magnitude, and no real solutions were put forward. The reports described a society in which a high percentage of women were illiterate and many of them tolerated violence against women, and in which the press had a pejorative attitude towards women victims of violence. Yet the Turkish Government maintained that it was unaware of the true dimensions of violence against women, and had done little to address the problem. She asked what action the Turkish Government had taken to meet the commitment it had made at the Fourth World Conference on Women to withdraw its reservations to the Convention, and whether there was any real prospect of reform of the Civil Code and Criminal Code, after so many years.

27. In connection with honour crimes, she asked how many women had been victims of such crimes, how many minors had committed such crimes, and how often women who were sent back home after reporting such crimes to the police were killed in order to preserve the family's honour.

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28. Ms. JAVATE DE DIOS said that the research cited in the report showed repeatedly that there were very serious attitudinal and behavioural patterns in Turkey, among both men and women, and that there was a great need for gender awareness programmes to change attitudes, especially with regard to violence against women and children, which seemed to be pervasive. She asked what programmes existed, and whether domestic violence crisis centres and emergency centres were adequate not just in urban but also in rural areas.

29. There had been reports from independent sources of specific cases of abuses and torture of women political detainees in Turkey; she asked whether the Government had taken any action to deal with those cases and demonstrate its determination to deal with violence whenever it occurred and whoever perpetrated it, whether in the public or private sector.

30. She also wished to know how many women had been arrested or detained on suspicion of terrorism or subversive activity.

31. Ms. OUEDRAOGO said that there seemed to be no programmes commensurate with the scale of the problem of violence against women. She asked whether journalists had been trained to take a positive image of women. It was a very serious matter that women themselves were unaware of their rights. There would be no progress unless stereotypes were eliminated, and for that broad advocacy was needed. There was a need to intensify information, education, and communications, especially in rural areas, where practices which were harmful to women's health and development were most entrenched. She asked whether the Convention had been translated into Turkish.

Article 6

32. Ms. BUSTELO GARCÍA DEL REAL said that from the information provided on prostitution, it seemed that the Turkish Government and society were more concerned about protecting morality and health than about the rights of women engaged in prostitution, who were often victims of violence, exploitation, and traffic in persons. Since prostitution was regulated, it should be possible to provide data on prostitutes and on the extent to which legislation was effective in preventing violations of their rights. The report indicated that foreign women engaged in prostitution were deported; she asked whether that applied to foreign women who were legal residents of Turkey.

33. Ms. JAVATE DE DIOS, noting that there were said to be 56 brothels in Turkey, asked what information was available on the situation of women in them, whether there were plans to close them down, what the public sentiment was on that point, and what programmes were being developed for the women from the brothels. Women from Bulgaria, Romania and the Russian Federation were stated to be entering Turkey illegally and engaging in prostitution. When foreign women engaged in prostitution, there was likely to be some degree of trafficking and connections with organized crime; she asked what programmes there were to address that problem.

34. Ms. CORTI said that she agreed with the comments made by previous speakers with respect to articles 5 and 6 of the Convention. Turkey lacked a strong policy of enlisting the aid of the mass media in changing the public's

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perception of violence against women. In her country, Italy, the national machinery for women had asked the parliamentary commission on the media to introduce programmes on the portrayal of women in the media and debates on women's issues, and that strategy had been a success. In Turkey, however, discussions of women's issues were restricted to publications and academic circles; that approach, which reflected the elitism of Turkish society, was insufficient. Efforts should be made to mobilize women working in the mass media. Moreover, she wondered whether efforts had been made to mobilize women in the Parliament to change the way in which violence was treated in the country's legislation. The figures presented in Turkey's report illustrated the seriousness of the situation and showed that measures were urgently needed to change not only men's attitudes towards violence, but women's attitudes as well. More resources should be allocated to the Directorate General on the Status and Problems of Women. Education and training were important for combating social stereotypes, and she was pleased to note that Turkey had introduced human rights education into school curricula; however, the problem of violence must be tackled from various angles.

35. Ms. GONZÁLEZ MARTÍNEZ said that Turkey's report implied that domestic violence occurred only in relatively low-income and poor families. She wondered whether research on violence had been conducted only in those sectors, since studies in other countries consistently showed that domestic violence occurred at all socio-economic levels. Since women played a major role in educating their children, women themselves were largely responsible for allowing those sociocultural patterns to persist. It was therefore important to strengthen awareness campaigns to inform women of their rights and obligations in society and the family. In view of the report's statement that physical violence against women was punishable only if the victim lodged a formal complaint, she asked how children and elderly women who suffered from physical and psychological abuse could report such acts.

36. She was concerned about provisions of the Penal Code which violated the Convention by differentiating between women and men in the treatment of certain crimes, inter alia by drawing a distinction between rape and attempted rape and by providing that rape was not a crime if it was perpetrated against a non-virgin. Particularly disturbing was the failure to punish the crime of rape if the perpetrator intended to marry the victim, since that situation actually involved two violations of the Convention: rape and forced marriage to the rapist. Lastly, the notion of "honour killings", which could be used as grounds for reducing the penalty for murder, was completely unacceptable.

Article 7

37. Ms. SCHÖPP-SCHILLING said that she was pleased that some political parties were attempting to introduce quotas for women's participation and to identify the needs of women voters. She asked whether any research institutes in Turkey conducted or planned to conduct voting analyses after elections, as such analyses had proved very useful, in countries such as the United States of America and Germany, for persuading political parties to promote female candidates and women's issues.

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Article 10

38. Ms. SCHÖPP-SCHILLING asked for more information on the decision taken at the 1996 Education Council meeting, inter alia in terms of the time-frame, goals, monitoring bodies, budgetary resources and sanctions. She also requested details of the curricula used in religious vocational training schools, and asked whether religious leaders could be involved in a dialogue on social issues. It must be recognized that allowing women to be marginalized from technological advancement would be very costly for Turkey and could not be justified on religious grounds.

39. Ms. BUSTELO GARCÍA DEL REAL asked what kind of education was imparted in religious schools. She also wanted to know whether schools in rural areas were single-sex or coeducational, whether there were enough schools for girls and whether girls' attendance rates were insufficient owing to a failure to emphasize their education. With respect to the indication that courses on the human rights of women would be included in school curricula, she asked whether the Convention would be used as a basic instrument for defending those rights. Since the report showed that lack of awareness of women's rights was a serious problem, she wondered what information campaigns were being planned in that area. Moreover, she asked for clarification of the indication that 80 per cent of women in higher education were studying home economics. Lastly, she asked whether young people had access to information on contraceptive use and whether single women had the same access to abortion as married women.

Article 11

40. Ms. JAVATE DE DIOS asked how the Turkish Government was addressing the problem of child labour, which seemed to be widespread in Turkey. With respect to article 7 of the Labour Code, which required enterprises employing between 100 and 150 female workers to establish nursing rooms and day nurseries, she asked whether those facilities were adequate and whether any penalties were imposed in cases of non-compliance.

41. Ms. BARE said that she agreed that human rights had no cultural boundaries; it was important to recognize that they had no ethnic boundaries either, given the obligation of States parties to the Convention to protect the rights of minorities. She was disturbed about the report's indication that, while the migration of minorities to urban areas was on the rise, no job placement services were available to them and the Government was making no special attempt to provide alternative employment opportunities for that sector. In its next periodic report, Turkey should present information on special programmes to give urban migrant women employment opportunities and to change traditional values that perpetuated women's social inequality. Moreover, special educational and employment measures would be needed in relation to the return of migrant women to their regions of origin.

Article 12

42. Ms. ABAKA asked whether elective sterilization was performed in Turkey and, if so, whether a breakdown of the rates for women and men could be provided. She also wanted to know whether any studies had been done on the correlation

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between alcoholism among women and domestic violence, and specifically whether married women who were victims of such violence tended to resort to alcohol or drugs in response to their situation. She also wondered how Turkish society treated unmarried and divorced women, since the fact that domestic violence was so widespread suggested that women endured such violence because of society's attitude towards women who did not have husbands.

Article 14

43. Ms. CORTI asked whether, in the wake of the Fourth World Conference on Women, the Turkish Government had planned any initiatives to redress the problem of illiteracy among rural women.

Article 16

44. Ms. SCHÖPP-SCHILLING said that she questioned the advisability of using the Swiss Civil Code as a model for the reform of the Turkish Civil Code, since the former was not among the world's most progressive civil codes; for example, some Swiss women could not even vote. The Turkish authorities should consider using other civil codes, such as those adopted in Scandinavian countries and in Germany. In the new civil code, the allocation of family property in the case of divorce should be changed to recognize property contributed by women and the wealth accrued as a result of women's homemaking capacities. She asked whether the concept of guilt would be removed from divorce law and whether both husband and wife would be expected to share household duties and to be responsible for both income generation and child care, or whether the traditional allocation of roles would persist. She also asked whether the presumption that the husband had the final say in household decision-making would be removed from Turkey's legislation.

45. With respect to article 4, she wondered whether it was true that Turkish women who worked abroad for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were not entitled to maternity leave. Lastly, she said that the Turkish Parliament should give high priority to the legislative reforms under consideration, and asked the Turkish delegation to bring the Committee's discussion to the attention of parliamentarians and the mass media so that the concerns voiced in that discussion could become part of the public debate in that country.

46. Ms. ERTÜRK (Turkey) assured the Committee members that the Turkish Government would reflect on their comments in developing new strategies. Its report had focused on problems rather than on the many examples of success in addressing women's issues because Turkey would not be satisfied with achieving only partial equality for women. That strategy had been fruitful, as it had prompted many helpful comments from the Committee.

47. The question of whether Turkish women had lost ground since the reforms of 1923 was a matter of debate in Turkey. The current deviations from some of the principles underlying the Turkish Republic were basically attributable to two factors: the tensions and contradictions inherent in an increasingly urban democratic society with a growing middle class that was challenging the country's traditional elitism by rightly demanding to be heard, and the consequent need to take social diversity into account in implementing reforms

and to learn to accept different viewpoints without compromising human rights; and the principle that the rights granted in the country's legislation could not be effectively enjoyed until they were claimed by women themselves. Currently, most Turkish women were not equipped to claim those rights, as the women's movement in Turkey was only about 10 years old. However, promising progress had been made in those 10 years, and the Government was committed to finding new solutions to problems and coping with the ambiguities of modernization while preserving the gains made thus far.

The meeting rose at 5.30 p.m.

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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

Sixteenth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 320th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 20 January 1997, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. ABAKA
(Vice-Chairperson)

CONTENTS

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION (continued)

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In the absence of Ms. Khan, Ms. Abaka, Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION (continued)

Initial report of Morocco (CEDAW/C/MOR/1)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Snoussi (Morocco) took a place at the Committee table.

2. Mr. SNOUSSI (Morocco) thanked the members of the Committee for their remarks and pertinent questions concerning the report and for their commendation of the progress achieved in Morocco. He recalled that his delegation had submitted to the Committee an addendum to its initial report at the time of its presentation.

3. His Government's policies on women's rights were based on the principles of the Shariah and demonstrated its determination to continue moving forward. In 1987, it had adopted a National Strategy for the Advancement of Moroccan Women to the Year 2000, drafted by an ad hoc commission composed of representatives of ministries, women's groups, the media, experts and researchers. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs was responsible for preparing implementation reports based on data from the interested parties. The report of Morocco to the Fourth World Conference on Women had also been prepared by a national commission, and the various interested parties had adopted it by consensus. It described the various measures concerning women's legal, economic and social rights implemented since 1985, and recommended further measures for the advancement of women. On the basis of those recommendations and of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs was preparing a draft national plan of action to be submitted to the national commission for approval. The draft detailed the Government's strategies for safe motherhood, employment, literacy and adult education, and improved education in rural areas.

4. The creation in November 1993 of the Ministry of Human Rights had been a concrete expression of the Government's policy for the protection and promotion of human rights. The Ministry was responsible for consultation with individuals and groups, investigating individual cases, promoting respect for human rights, ensuring the conformity of domestic law with international instruments ratified by Morocco and promoting a human rights culture in society as a whole. It was particularly attentive to the human rights of women.

5. The Ministry was involved, inter alia, in drafting legislative and regulatory texts, promoting urgent measures in favour of disadvantaged sectors of society, and following up government projects in those areas. Since its creation, it had invited women's groups to take part in permanent consultation and dialogue aimed at establishing a joint cooperation programme.

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6. In December 1994, the Ministry of Human Rights had signed a partnership agreement with the Ministry of Education with a view to strengthening the teaching of human rights, including women's rights. In its relations with the Arab world, the Muslim world and the international community, Morocco had always advocated a policy of peace among peoples, religious and cultural tolerance and rejection of political violence, and it was the duty of its education system to promote those values. A joint commission composed of representatives of the two ministries had been set up to promote the incorporation into teaching materials of universally recognized human rights and in March 1996, the Ministry of Higher Education and Research had concluded an agreement with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for the creation of a UNESCO Chair of Human Rights. Such measures in the educational field were designed to overcome prejudices based on the stereotyped roles of men and women. Another noteworthy initiative was the production by the Ministry of Human Rights, in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), of a brochure containing the text of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in a simplified and illustrated form designed to be read by children.

7. Treaties signed and ratified by Morocco took second place in the hierarchy of its legal standards, after the Constitution and before the law. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, like other Conventions, was an integral part of the law. The Ministry of Human Rights would ensure that the initial report was widely publicized in order to promote public awareness, particularly among women, of the provisions of the Convention.

8. As for article 2, the Government of Morocco was prepared to implement it provided that it was not in contradiction with the Shariah. In 1992, His Majesty Hassan II had taken steps to reform the Personal Status Code (Moudouana), resulting in the legislative Dahirs of 10 September 1993, which were intended to stabilize the family, combat the abuse of law and redress a number of previous injustices. Other reforms had followed, including the introduction of a new commercial code which no longer required a husband's authorization for engaging in commercial activity or for obtaining a passport. The Dahir of 12 November 1992 concerning social security enabled women workers to receive maternity benefits for 12 weeks instead of 10 during the period of maternity leave. A draft labour code was before the Parliament, and other drafts were in preparation in the field of criminal law.

9. Turning to article 5 of the Convention, it was true that legislative reform was not enough to change behaviour patterns. Since the law could not change people's attitudes, it was necessary to inform women of their new rights so that they could lay claim to them in courts of law. The Government was taking a gradual approach. To avoid creating a gulf between law and reality, legislators were endeavouring to adopt a consensus policy.

10. In reference to the issue of prostitution, the Criminal Code made it an offence to aid, assist or protect the prostitution of others, to share in the earnings of the prostitution of others or to act as an intermediary for the purposes of prostitution or debauchery. The Code provided for penalties of six months to two years' imprisonment and a fine, or two to five years' imprisonment and a fine if corruption of minors was involved. In 1973, Morocco had ratified

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the Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others; in 1992, it had ratified the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances; and in 1993, it had ratified the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

11. Morocco had expressed a reservation to article 9, paragraph 2, of the Convention, concerning nationality. His delegation believed that the wording of that paragraph reflected the values prevalent at the time of its elaboration, when the need to prevent statelessness had been an important consideration. As for article 10, particularly measures to reduce disparities between the sexes in the field of education, the Ministry of Education had adopted a series of strategies in the 1990s aimed at adapting methods and programmes, improving enrolment rates and encouraging the education of girls. Current measures included a programme to support primary education in rural areas and an experimental project to encourage the enrolment of girls.

12. In order to relieve the negative social impact of structural adjustment, the Government had adopted a social development strategy for the 1990s, which had given rise to a programme of social priorities for 13 disadvantaged provinces; its first phase was provided for in the 1996-1997 budget. The programme consisted of three complementary and interdependent projects: basic education, basic health and national promotion. The basic education project was in two parts, namely primary education and literacy. The primary education aspect was designed to improve access to primary education in rural areas, particularly for girls, to contribute to development of school canteens, to improve conditions in pre-school Koranic classes in order to give greater access to that form of education, particularly for girls, and to improve working methods and electronic equipment in the departments concerned.

13. The national strategy for literacy and adult education was designed to adapt programmes to the real needs of the population by dealing with the problem gradually with integrated and complementary programmes. The aim was to reduce the illiteracy rate from the current figure of 55 per cent to 10 per cent by the year 2010, by training 680,000 persons per year. The literacy department of the Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs had been upgraded to a Directorate in November 1996. The programme involved two closely linked activities: the "post-literacy" element, to enable rural inhabitants involved in the programme to put their new knowledge into practice, and the "literacy" element, which entailed a number of changes in current teaching methods in order to better adapt them to varying needs on a province-by-province basis.

14. Several members of the Committee had asked questions in connection with article 11 of the Convention. Article 8 of the draft labour code before Parliament prohibited all discrimination against an employee on the basis of race, colour, sex, marital status, religion, political views, national origin or social background in respect of his or her employment or profession. In 1983, the Supreme Court had struck down a rule requiring that air hostesses employed by Royal Air Moroc should be unmarried. The 1996 Constitution gave women the right to own property and to engage in business. Adult women had the legal right to manage their own property, to dispose of it, to inherit, and to enter into contracts. More and more women were joining the workforce, out of economic

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necessity and as a result of the liberalization of the law in that area. There were increasing numbers of women in decision-making positions in both the private and public sectors, and the numbers of women in the judiciary, some of them occupying senior positions, were steadily increasing. As for article 12, one of the fundamental duties of all health-care professionals was to give equal treatment to patients without any form of discrimination. Respect for the dignity, integrity and consent of the human person was central to the Government's health policy. Consent and freedom of choice were indispensable for all forms of health care, including family planning and prevention of the spread of AIDS.

15. Since the early 1980s, the Government's health policy had been inspired by the universal goal of "Health for all". Priority had been given to developing basic health care, care for mothers and infants and family planning, as well as more recent programmes to combat deficiency diseases, sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS. Health care was provided at two levels: local health centres in urban and rural areas, and a network of 104 hospitals.

16. The private sector was involved in family planning and safe motherhood programmes. Since its implementation, the family planning programme had achieved considerable results. Use of contraceptive methods by married women had reached 50 per cent in 1995, compared with 42 per cent in 1992 and 19 per cent in 1980. There was, however, a considerable discrepancy in that respect between urban and rural communities. The national family planning programme was financed partly by the State and partly by assistance from international organizations. Women were free to choose a method of contraception, and the husband's consent was not required except for sterilization. The most widely used method was the contraceptive pill.

17. Statistics for mortality, morbidity, life expectancy at birth and fertility had all shown considerable improvements. However, in the area of safe motherhood, the results achieved had not lived up to expectations: the maternal mortality rate was still high, at 332 per 100,000 live births. The main causes included haemorrhages, infections, toxaemia and high blood pressure. Problems currently facing the health system included the under-use of rural maternity centres, insufficient means of emergency evacuation, lack of public information, and budgetary constraints. The incidence of anaemia among women of child-bearing years was 30 per cent, and among pregnant women, 45 per cent. All women had free access to health care, including measures to prevent the spread of AIDS. Public information and awareness campaigns concerning AIDS had been organized, particularly for women prisoners. Three hundred and thirty-five cases of AIDS had been reported in Morocco in 1996. Reported cases among women had increased from 13 in 1987-1991 to 95 in 1992-1996.

18. It was hoped to bring about a reduction of 25 per cent in maternal mortality and morbidity rates by the year 2001, by promoting prenatal examinations, attended deliveries, and post-natal examinations. Other measures included promoting the use of modern contraceptive methods, particularly long-term methods such as intrauterine devices, and encouraging the participation of the private sector in supplying contraceptives.

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19. The Government intended to take further measures to promote social mobilization in favour of safe motherhood, family planning and women's health issues, strengthening its information, education and communication strategy, improving access to health care through measures that included the creation of an obligatory health insurance system. A national congress on the theme "Women and health", organized in December 1996 and involving non-governmental organizations, political parties, trade unionists and others, had endeavoured to increase awareness in civil society of women's health issues and to promote community participation with a view to improving health statistics by the year 2001.

20. In reply to a question from a Committee member, he said that abortion was clearly one of the major threats to the health and life of mothers and to the future fertility of the women concerned. That was why Moroccan law prohibited pregnancies outside marriage and mobilized all its energies to prevent women having recourse to abortion; the latter was prohibited by articles 449-458 of the Criminal Code, although under article 453, abortion was not punishable when it was necessary to save the mother's life.

21. Morocco had declared that it could not be bound by article 15 of the Convention, particularly the provisions relating to the choice by women of their residence and domicile. Under article 34 of the Moudouana, one of the rights and duties of spouses was to live together. However, the Supreme Court had decided in February 1972 that, if the husband had a contagious disease, the wife could be authorized to live away from the marital home.

22. Morocco's reservations with respect to article 16 of the Convention were based on the Shariah, particularly the provisions concerning equality between men and women during marriage and upon its dissolution. As far as the marriage of an insane person was concerned, equality between the sexes was enshrined in article 7 of the Moudouana, under which the judge could authorize the marriage of an insane or mentally retarded person on the basis of a report of a council of psychiatrists stating that marriage could be salutary for that person, provided that the other party was informed of the illness and agreed to the marriage. The two adouls (notaries) could draw up the marriage certificate only after presentation of a copy of the marriage permit issued by the judge. Article 12, paragraph 4 of the Moudouana specifically protected family cohesion, the moral integrity of marriage and women from pressure from their guardians.

23. In the case of polygamy, he pointed out that while the husband remained the head of the family, the wife was still entitled to keep her own property, to a dowry, to alimony and to have priority custody of the children.

24. With respect to domestic violence, women could file for divorce under article 56 of the Moudouana, if they have proper proof of the charges, notably a medical certificate. Divorces were granted by judges only after all attempts at reconciliation had failed. Currently, there were no statistics available on the extent of violence against women.

25. As far as repudiation was concerned, since 1993 Morocco had decided to award a compensation to the wife in the event of arbitrary unilateral repudiation by the husband. Conversely, if the wife wished to dissolve the

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marriage, she had to pay compensation to her husband. In the event of unilateral repudiation by the husband, the marriage was not dissolved, but suspended. The judge established the period of legal withdrawal of the wife at three months; the idda (period of continence) was designed to verify whether or not the woman was pregnant.

26. The CHAIRPERSON, noting that the representative of Morocco had not provided answers to all the Committee's questions, expressed the hope that the answers would be provided in the next report.

27. Ms. SHALEV asked for the detailed information provided in the oral presentation to be provided in writing. The recommendations of the November 1996 national congress on women's health should be included in Morocco's subsequent report. Noting that the percentage of trained personnel attending births was 40 per cent, she urged the Government to focus on raising that percentage, especially in the rural areas, in order to decrease the rate of maternal mortality. The Government should also concentrate on providing emergency services for childbirth in rural areas.

28. She noted that safe abortion was not a threat to women's health or fertility; it was unsafe, illegal abortions which endangered women's life, health and fertility. She therefore urged the Government to consider the implications of such unsafe abortions, owing to their illegality and their impact on maternal mortality rates.

29. Ms. BUSTELO GARCÍA DEL REAL said that there was a contradiction between the Government's efforts to improve the situation of women and the religious law, which kept women in a subordinate position, particularly within the family. Other Muslim countries had made further progress than Morocco in the area of gender equality. Religion should never be used as a pretext for not implementing the provisions of the Convention. That position had also been forcefully stated at the Fourth World Conference on Women. Unless women achieved equality within the family, it was impossible for them to achieve equality in the workplace, education and health.

30. In that regard, she recommended that the Government of Morocco should use the Convention in the context of human rights education, because the Convention, the work of the Committee and its general recommendations were very useful tools. As Morocco had done with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, it should publish and disseminate the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in such a way that people from all walks of life with varying levels of education could easily understand it. The Government should do its utmost to ensure that Moroccan men and women were conversant with the Convention and the Committee's work, and its conclusions with respect to the Moroccan report itself.

31. The next report should be prepared in accordance with the guidelines. It should also take into account the general recommendations, in particular the one on disabled women (General Recommendation No. 18). The next report should provide information on what action Morocco was taking to ensure that disabled girls and women could have access to education, training and employment. The Government of Morocco should also establish specific measures to protect young

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women emigrating to other countries to prevent them from falling victim to trafficking.

32. Ms. SCHÖPP-SCHILLING drew attention to the fact that the Government of Morocco's second report was due in 1998. Noting that the Committee's concluding comments were the results of the constructive dialogue between the Committee and the Government, in that they contained both praise and concerns, she wondered to what extent the Government intended to distribute those concluding comments.

33. Ms. TALLAWY, noting the encouraging progress made in the Moroccan judiciary with the appointment of women judges, expressed the hope that other countries in the region, including her own, could draw on that experience. However, she wondered why similar progress had not been made by women in the area of diplomacy and, specifically, why there were no women ambassadors. Since the reservation on nationality had seemed to be related to some past experience of the country, she wondered whether the Government was thinking about withdrawing that reservation.

34. Ms. OUEDRAOGO said that while the Committee now understood better the spirit of the ongoing reforms in Morocco based on the Shariah, it still did not understand why discrimination persisted. In that regard, she agreed with previous speakers that religion should not be an obstruction to the advancement of women. She had been very pleased to learn about the concrete steps that Morocco was taking to move forward gradually on the basis of national consensus. She asked how women could participate in such consensus, since the majority of them remained illiterate. She wondered whether they were aware of their rights, and whether a qualitative survey had been carried out with respect to women's views on polygamy, repudiation and the fact that crucial decisions on matters affecting them were taken on their behalf without consulting them. While it was up to every society to preserve its customs and positive traditional values, she was not sure that women were participating as appropriately or as fully as they should in that consensus. In that regard, she wished to recommend that the Government of Morocco should do its utmost to better inform women about their rights. Only then could consensus have any true value. However, she was extremely impressed with the Government's concrete programmes to improve the status of women and encouraged it to continue along that path, because it was only through such programmes and laws that current trends could be changed.

35. Ms. JAVATE DE DIOS expressed concern about the lack of data on violence against women. The Government of Morocco should consider that issue in detail. The next report should provide more information about the high incidence of violence against women, especially domestic violence, the incidence of rape and incest and what preventive measures the Government intended to take to address that serious problem. Indeed, it was critical that law enforcement agencies and women themselves should be educated on that issue. She wondered how the Government was dealing with the fact that a very low number of women participated in political decision-making.

36. Mr. SNOUSSI (Morocco), replying to the comments and questions of Committee members, said that his country had made considerable progress during its 35 years of independence. As far as Islam's impact on the life of women was concerned, he noted that religion was a total lifestyle and an integral part of

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Morocco's culture and civilization. It was a rampart against fundamentalism and terrorism. A basic concern of his Government was religious fundamentalism, which sought to impose intolerance. While respecting religion, his Government endeavoured to give women the rights and place that they deserved in society. His Government was definitely not trying to avoid its obligations to implement the Convention. As far as publicity for the Convention was concerned, his Government had used the limited resources at its disposal to publicize it throughout the country. He appealed to the Committee for assistance in further disseminating the Convention.

37. With regard to the representation of women in Morocco's diplomatic corps, he acknowledged that there were only two women ambassadors. One of the obstacles to the appointment of more women was that their spouses often refused to travel with them to overseas postings. A change in social and cultural attitudes was therefore needed.

38. Within the limits of its economic resources, Morocco was doing all it could to improve the literacy rate of women, especially in rural areas. Rural water supply systems, for example, were being improved in order to free young girls from the time-consuming chore of fetching water from long distances and thereby to enable them to attend school.

39. On the subject of the lack of hospital care for rural women in childbirth, the tradition of having recourse to local midwives was deeply entrenched, and persistent efforts over a long period of time would be needed in order to change those habits. The Government nevertheless provided training for some 200 midwives each year to assist with deliveries in rural areas. Mobile medical units were also employed to transport pregnant women to urban hospitals for delivery.

40. His delegation undertook to transmit to the competent authorities those questions to which it had been unable to respond. Morocco had made significant progress in promoting the rights of women in several areas, although, given the formidable obstacles that existed, much remained to be done. He hoped that the Committee would provide encouragement to the Government to continue its efforts in those areas covered by the Convention.

41. Ms. TALLAWY welcomed the recognition by the Moroccan delegation that the religion of Islam guaranteed the rights of women. She wondered, however, whether the Government was doing enough to clarify those rights for the population at large, and especially for the younger generations. It was important to counteract the contrary message which Islamic fundamentalists sought to disseminate through books, tapes and other media. In view of his special status in the Muslim world, King Hassan II might be prevailed upon to sponsor a compilation of the rights of women under the Shariah in order to save upcoming generations from misguided interpretations.

42. Mr. SNOUSSI (Morocco) observed that King Hassan II, each year during the month of Ramadan, organized a conference to which theologians from both the Western and Muslim worlds were invited. At that conference, participants sought to clarify the correct interpretation of the teachings of Islam, including its teachings concerning the rights of women.

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43. Ms. Yung-Chung KIM noted that 10,000 women, representing 40 per cent of the student population, had graduated from Moroccan universities and other institutions of higher learning in the 1993-1994 academic year. She wondered whether those graduates were making any efforts to stay in touch with rural women in Morocco and to develop a strong feminist movement, similar to the one which had had such noted impact on changes in South Korean society. She would also welcome additional information on the role of non-governmental organizations in that area.

44. Ms. CORTI observed that legislative elections were due to be held in 1997 in Morocco and expressed the hope that steps would be taken to ensure that women candidates not only ran for office but were also given the kind of support that would increase their chances of being elected, in order to improve the current low level of representation of women in Parliament.

45. Ms. ACAR said that, while it might be natural for a delegation to speak from the national or religious perspective of the State which it represented, the Committee could approach the reports under consideration only from the perspective of whether or not the universal rights of women were being protected. Even though, at their origin, the teachings of Islam were beneficial to women, the cultural realities of that period had changed immeasurably, and what might have been regarded as progressive then were no longer progressive today. Even though, if correctly interpreted, Islamic law did not violate the universal rights of women, as a State party to the Convention and in the spirit of that instrument, Morocco must approach the Convention from the perspective of protecting the universal rights of women.

46. Mr. SNOUSSI (Morocco) said that the statistics concerning women university graduates in Morocco cited by Ms. Yung-Chung Kim were accurate. Additional published material on the subject was available in the conference room for interested experts. Concerning the role of non-governmental organizations, there were over 50 such organizations currently operating in Morocco. They played an active role in international conferences and received assistance from the Government. On the subject of the participation of women in the forthcoming legislative elections, King Hassan II had already appealed to all Moroccans, especially young people and women, to register to vote and had stressed the important role of women in that process.

47. The CHAIRPERSON said that the Committee's main area of concern was with the Moroccan reservations to articles 2 and 6 of the Convention. Indeed, those reservations precluded the effective realization of the Convention's objectives. Pressure must therefore be brought on the Government to remove them. She noted that other countries in which Islam was also the major religion, such as Turkey and Tunisia, had devised strategies to implement the provisions of the Convention. Programmes must be put in place to effectively combat religious fundamentalism of any kind and to put an end to the systematic discrimination from which women as a group suffered.

48. Mr. SNOUSSI (Morocco) said that the reservations which Morocco had entered to certain articles of the Convention were not the result of caprice but of a national consensus on the matter. It was not possible to go against that consensus or to change the religion of the State simply to please the Committee.

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He did not think it advisable, moreover, to attempt to pressure the Moroccan Government in any way. Better results might be gained through persuasion. He hoped that the Committee would understand the positions which he had so amply outlined.

49. The CHAIRPERSON said that the Committee had thus concluded its consideration of the initial report of Morocco.

50. Mr. Snoussi (Morocco) withdrew.

Report of the pre-session working group (CEDAW/C/1997/CRP.1 and Add.1-5)

51. Ms. CORTI, speaking as Chairperson of the pre-session working group, said that, at its sixteenth session, the working group had prepared a list of issues and questions to be submitted to the Governments of Canada, Denmark, the Philippines, Turkey and Venezuela. In considering the reports of those countries, the working group had consulted the general guidelines on the form and content of periodic reports and the Committee's general recommendations. Each member of the working group had been supported by a member of the Secretariat. The working group had received written questions from all members of the Committee with regard to the reports of Canada, Denmark and Venezuela. It had attempted to compensate through constructive dialogue for the fact that it had not received written questions concerning the fourth periodic report of the Philippines and the third periodic report of Turkey.

52. Some of the reporting countries had followed the Committee's guidelines, which had greatly facilitated the work of the pre-session working group. Where countries had not followed the guidelines, the working group had had to waste time organizing information article by article and had had difficulty in gaining an overview. The working group would support a recommendation of the Committee, at the time reports were requested, that States parties should follow the guidelines.

53. Some progress had been made in the implementation of the Convention, but much remained to be done, particularly in the areas of concern outlined at the Fourth World Conference on Women. A great deal depended on the political will of States parties. She noted the rise in fundamentalism and general violence, and their impact on women in particular. Very little progress had been made on eliminating the stereotyped conception of women's role. Referring to a recommendation of the Fourth World Conference on Women and article 7 of the Convention, she also deplored continued discrimination against women in public life.

54. In a discussion with Ms. King, Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women, the pre-session working group had expressed its disappointment that it had not had the input of all Committee members in preparing the questions and issues submitted to Governments, and in formulating concluding comments. It had also commented on the waste of time in arranging information article by article when countries had not followed the Committee's guidelines. Perhaps the Secretariat could help in that regard.

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55. The working group must decide whether it wished to devote its session to meeting with non-governmental organizations, discussing certain topics in depth or preparing a general overview of the situation of women in the world.

56. Ms. SCHOPP-SCHILLING said that, in her experience, it had always been the case that questions were submitted to the pre-session working group by a few experts only. Now that the working group met twice a year, it should rethink its work methods; reports for consideration by the Committee should be identified two sessions ahead. A post-session working group, similar to those of other human rights treaty bodies, could prepare questions for future sessions in order to give representatives of countries more time to reflect. The working group should also decide whether to focus, in future, on a limited number of issues or countries as a follow-up to its concluding comments on periodic reports.

57. Ms. SHALEV agreed that a post-session working group would give States more time to respond to the Committee's questions and non-governmental organizations more time to prepare their reports. It would also enable States parties to submit their answers in writing so that the Committee could engage in a true dialogue with them during the actual sessions.

58. She inquired about the difference in procedure between initial and periodic reports. In particular, she wondered why questions were not prepared for initial reports. She welcomed the suggestion that the working group should meet with non-governmental organizations or prepare analyses of reports. At the same time, she recalled from her own experience as a member of the working group that the most difficult task had been to compare initial and periodic reports. Periodic reports should not be as comprehensive as initial reports, but rather should merely provide the Committee with an update.

59. Ms. GONZÁLEZ MARTÍNEZ agreed that questions on initial reports should also be sent to States parties in advance. A post-session working group would not be as useful as the pre-session working group, because it was vital to have the input of all Committee members for the consideration of reports. She did agree, however, that the Committee could review its methods of work and perhaps introduce some changes in 1998. It could also consider the possibility of determining the number of reports to be reviewed two sessions ahead of time; for example, in January, the pre-session working group would review the reports to be considered in July. Other human rights treaty bodies, including the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Human Rights Committee, gave States parties much more time - at least three months - to prepare and submit replies to questions.

60. Committee members who were not members of the pre-session working group should submit their questions well in advance, preferably by article or chapter. Information provided by non-governmental organizations, while secondary to the reports of States parties, could also be useful if it was sent to the Committee in sufficient time.

61. Ms. CORTI, replying to Ms. Shalev's questions, recalled that, following a similar discussion, the Committee had taken a unanimous decision not to prepare questions concerning initial reports and to attempt, instead, to establish a

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direct and constructive dialogue with the States parties. She also wished to assure the Committee that the pre-session working group had taken into account the previous reports of States parties whose periodic reports were being considered. She agreed with Ms. Schöpp-Schilling that the Committee should review concluding comments in order to facilitate its work and sharpen its analyses of reports.

62. The CHAIRPERSON added that the Secretariat also provided the Committee with an analysis of the content of the initial and other previous reports.

63. Ms. BUSTELO GARCÍA DEL REAL stressed the importance of the concluding comments in analysing reports from States parties. The Committee should do its utmost to ensure that the concluding comments were comprehensive, and that they were presented in the order of the articles of the Convention. Referring to Ms. Shalev's observation, she said that it was indeed necessary to review all articles of the Convention in the periodic reports in order to ensure that States parties had not regressed in any way. It would probably complicate the Committee's work to begin submitting questions for initial reports, particularly since the Committee expected to have fewer initial reports to review. She had long been a proponent of specializing - perhaps by article, by country or by initial versus periodic reports - in order to accomplish more work with greater effectiveness.

64. Ms. TALLAWY said that non-governmental organizations were a vital source of information on the situation at the grass-roots level and could propose practical solutions to representatives of States parties. Referring to the comments by the representative of Morocco concerning his country's reservation to article 2 of the Convention, she maintained that international law must be respected as well. Perhaps the Committee could append introductions culled from previous reports of States parties to the questions it submitted. The introductory statements would summarize major developments, including reservations. It was to be hoped that States parties would publish the Committee's concluding remarks on the previous report, together with its introductions and questions to the report currently under review, in order to increase awareness at the national level.

65. She, too, had urged the Committee to consider having its members specialize in order to expedite its work. Her proposal had been rejected on the grounds that experts should also have an opportunity to raise questions concerning areas in which they were not specializing. In fact, though, one did not preclude the other. Committee members could specialize and still be free to pose questions in other areas.

66. The CHAIRPERSON welcomed Ms. Tallawy's comment concerning the Moroccan reservation, noting that most Governments needed to be pressured in some form in order to comply with the Convention.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.

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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

Sixteenth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 321st MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 20 January 1997, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Ms. KHAN

CONTENTS

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION (continued)

WAYS AND MEANS OF EXPEDITING THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION (continued)

Initial report of Slovenia (CEDAW/C/SVN/1) (continued)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms. Koman-Perenič (Slovenia), Ms. Kozmik (Slovenia) and Ms. Neubauer (Slovenia) took places at the Committee table.

2. Ms. KOZMIK (Slovenia), replying to questions raised by members of the Committee at an earlier meeting, said that her country, which had succeeded to the treaty obligations of the former Yugoslavia, had disseminated the text of the Convention to all public institutions, and to non-governmental organizations and individuals. Awareness-raising was an important task of the Office for Women's Policies, since its inception in 1992, the Office had disseminated a variety of publications on issues affecting women.

3. Under the socialist political system, a large number of women had held political office but real power had been concentrated in the hands of a few individuals, mostly men. The current system was very competitive, and more must be done to improve women's participation in political life. In the elections to the National Assembly held in 1990, 1992 and 1996, women had represented 17.9 per cent, 14.8 per cent and 17.1 per cent of the candidates, and 15.0 per cent, 13.3 per cent and 7.8 per cent of the elected deputies, respectively. The parliamentary Committee for Women's Policies was composed of 13 deputies, including four men.

4. The Office for Women's Policies was an independent government advisory body which had been established to oversee progress towards equal rights and opportunities for women and men in all areas. Its activities included monitoring the status of women in Slovenia and the enforcement of their rights as guaranteed by the Constitution, the laws and the international conventions to which Slovenia was a party; analysing proposed legislation; and conducting research and preparing documentation. The Office had a staff of eight and a budget of approximately $350,000. It was empowered to initiate legislative action by participating in joint working groups with independent experts and government officials. Its recommendations were addressed to the Government and must be taken into consideration in the drafting of proposed legislation. The establishment of the Office, rather than a ministry of women's affairs, reflected a compromise between the party in power and parliamentary women's groups, which had seized the opportunity to establish national machinery for women's rights without waiting for the legislative changes that would be needed in order to establish a new ministry. Nevertheless, among the priorities that had been identified in a draft national programme for promoting gender equality was the mainstreaming of gender equality within all government policies and the strengthening of existing machinery.

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5. The Office was responsible for the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women.

6. Ms. KOMAN-PERENIČ (Slovenia) said that the basic legal provisions prohibiting all forms of discrimination against women were laid down in articles 14 to 65 of the Constitution, which regulated the relationship between individuals and the State and between individuals. The right to work was guaranteed by article 49 of the Constitution, which prohibited discrimination in employment. Marriage and the family were governed by articles 53 and 54 of the Constitution. The mutual rights and obligations of parents and children were in conformity with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Children born out of wedlock had the same rights as children born within marriage. Both the mother's and the father's role were recognized by law. Much legislation which predated the current transition was in need of revision.

7. The Constitutional Court decided on cases involving conflicts between domestic law and international agreements, among other matters. The Constitutional Court had not yet considered a case involving the Convention.

8. The role of ombudsperson had been established by the Constitution with a view to protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms. The ombudsperson supervised relations between State bodies and public authorities, on the one hand, and private citizens on the other hand. On the basis of the experience gained so far, a proposal for the designation of a gender equality ombudsperson would be included in the national programme for promoting gender equality.

9. The Penal Code referred to "offences against sexual integrity", which could also be committed within marriage. Only the victim could report such offences to the police and the public prosecutor and initiate criminal proceedings. Both the Penal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure treated violence within the family as a crime. In cases involving domestic violence, the victim could obtain protection orders. As to the penalties, article 185 of the Penal Code provided for sentences of imprisonment of 15 days to 20 years. In the case of procurement, which was a criminal offence, harsher penalties were provided for the procurement of juveniles than for adults.

10. Ms. KOZMIK (Slovenia) said that her Government and the Office for Women's Policies were well aware of the various constraints and obstacles to the achievement of full equality for women. Nevertheless, the positive experience of European and other countries in the implementation of affirmative action could not simply be transferred to Slovenia. The effects of new legislation must be assessed in the light of the current economic transition.

11. Research had shown that the problems of minority women were no different from those of other women. The Constitution protected national minorities against discrimination and guaranteed them special rights with regard to language, education, the media, and so on.

12. As the various types of family patterns in Slovenia were recognized and treated equally by law, the growing number of single-parent families was not a major concern. Parents were responsible for children regardless of the parents' relationship.

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13. The primary-school curriculum included a course on ethics and society for pupils in classes 5 to 8. There was no special course on family life for pupils in the lower grades.

14. In recent years, the Office for Women's Policies had organized a number of discussions on family policy, with special emphasis on the problem of reconciling family and work responsibilities. The image of women in the media had also been considered. The Office had encouraged the media and advertising agencies to refrain from presenting women as sexual objects. The success of those efforts was reflected in a new code adopted by the Advertising Chamber to promote the use of non-sexist and non-stereotyped images of women and men. Greater public awareness of offensive and degrading stereotypes had resulted in the withdrawal of several advertisements.

15. In the past 10 years public discussion of domestic violence had broken down the wall of silence previously surrounding the issue. Non-governmental organizations had set up 12 helplines for victims of abuse. The Office cooperated with such organizations and assisted them in various projects. It had also organized a round-table discussion on violence against women; several of the proposals made on that occasion had been included in draft legislation. Special attention had been paid to raising young people's awareness of the issue of violence.

16. Both official and informal statistical data showed that most victims of domestic violence were children and women. Such violence was difficult to detect, prevent and punish, as it was considered a private matter. Physical and sexual abuse often went unreported.

17. Police officers were well trained in dealing with victims of domestic violence. Women had the right to be examined by a female police officer, a female doctor, and so on. Regular programmes were carried out to sensitize and educate persons working in that area.

18. Sexual harassment was a new issue in her country. The Office for Women's Policies had stimulated public debate on the subject and planned to carry out further awareness-raising activities in 1997.

19. According to governmental and non-governmental estimates, there were from 1,500 to 2,000 prostitutes in Slovenia. Prostitution was not a criminal offence, but procurement was. Legislation had been proposed to legalize prostitution, protect prostitutes and provide them with social security and health care; progress was slow, however, because the absence of street prostitution limited concern about the issue. Most prostitutes came to Slovenia from other Eastern European countries and worked officially as dancers and nightclub entertainers.

20. The Office for Women's Policies had initiated a public debate on the issue, stressing the need for research and information. The media had done a great deal to raise awareness concerning prostitution.

21. As to the so-called sex industry, while the availability of pornography had increased under the new system, that did not appear to be a cause for concern.

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A proposal to regulate access to pornography was being considered. There were no national television programmes or magazines with a pornographic content.

22. With regard to women's participation in political decision-making, it must be borne in mind that Slovenia had been an independent State for only five years. Under the previous political system, quotas for representation of various population groups had brought many women into representative bodies, but those bodies were not where the decisions were made. Moreover, democratization had reopened the door to traditional and conservative values. In addition, although there was separation of church and State, the Catholic Church and its values exerted an influence on public opinion. The political environment was still in a state of flux: in the most recent Parliamentary elections, 25 parties had contended for seats, with seven currently represented.

23. Ms. KOMAN-PERENIČ (Slovenia), in reply to questions concerning the judiciary, said that women were treated fairly and equally in the Slovenian judicial system. Sixty per cent of all judges, who were elected by Parliament rather than appointed, were women. In the higher courts, 46 per cent of judges were women and the number had increased steadily over the past four years. Of the civil, commercial and penal chambers of the high courts, two were led by women. Furthermore, in the penal chamber, previously dominated by men, more than one third of the judges were women. In the Supreme Court, there were nine women judges out of a total of 31. Since the total number of women students at faculties of law had reached over 60 per cent, an increase in the number of women judges could be expected in the future.

24. Ms. KOZMIK (Slovenia), responding to questions on article 8, said that women's participation in diplomacy was increasing. Among the 40 heads of diplomatic missions of the Republic of Slovenia, 8 were women. A new Department of Diplomacy had been established in the university as a joint study programme of the Faculty of Social Sciences and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; half its students were women.

25. Turning to questions regarding article 10, she said that the basic principles governing education were covered in a "white book" on education issued in 1995 by the Ministry of Education and Sport. Education on human rights and equality was among the basic principles included. Pre-school programmes were gender-neutral, and educators in pre-school institutions took specially designed courses on human rights and gender equality, financed by the Ministry of Education and Sport, to learn how to teach those topics to children at that age level. Such topics were also included in optional courses and extracurricular activities at the primary and secondary levels. Technical courses and home economic courses, which were optional, were attended by both boys and girls.

26. With regard to the feminization of some professions, the most obvious reason for it was gender division of social roles. The traditional division of labour in the private sphere had an effect on such patterns in the public sphere in general. Primary socialization also had a role to play. To improve that situation, an educational policy aimed at encouraging girls and women, as well as boys and men, to enter non-traditional fields was included in the draft national programme for gender equality. The situation was improving to some

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extent, largely because of educational efforts beginning at the pre-school level. Among other proposed measures were gender guidelines for curriculum. Slovenia did not yet have an institute of women's studies or gender studies, but the University of Ljubljana did offer several courses in the field at both undergraduate and post-graduate levels. In the Faculties of Philosophy and Social Sciences, an increase in gender-related topics for degree theses had been noted, which confirmed the need for a more systematically organized academic programme in that area. Several projects were under way, including an analysis of gender roles as portrayed in primary school textbooks. The national programme for gender equality had recommended the establishment of a gender studies research institute, and the Office for Women's Policies was supporting research projects, on women's history in Slovenia in the 1980s and on violence against women.

27. In contrast to other post-communist countries, Slovenia had a well-organized day-care system for children, which had been established in response to the high percentage of employed women and the rapid industrialization which had occurred under socialism. There was also a well-organized informal day-care network which covered the majority of children not in kindergartens. The number of full-day primary schools had declined sharply since the 1980s, but a system of "after-school" programmes had replaced them to some extent.

28. Under the new Education Act, vocational training had been made part of compulsory education. There would be both two-year vocational schools and three- to four-year secondary vocational school programmes, with a practical training component organized in cooperation with factories and businesses. Students in practical training received health and pension benefits. Beginning with the 1993-1994 academic year, the College of Internal Affairs had been opened to women, and in 1994-1995 they had made up 46 per cent of the student body. Proposals to allow women to study in the School of Internal Affairs at the secondary level were part of the national programme for gender equality. In general, the number of students receiving a non-university degree was decreasing because that level of education no longer satisfied the demands of the labour market of the 1990s.

29. With regard to questions posed on article 11, Slovenia was undergoing a transition period where it was attempting to harmonize all its legislation in the labour area. The Labour Relations Act was expected to be the first bill submitted to Parliament by the new Government. Rather than pass a separate equality act, equality provisions would be made an integral part of all future labour legislation. The Office for Women's Policies was aware of the principles of equal pay for equal work and equal pay for work of equal value, and was giving special attention to them in discussions on new employment legislation and job classifications.

30. Approximately 55 per cent of trade union members were women, but they were not organized into special women's groups, except in the journalists' union, and had not reached leadership positions. As part of its employment policy, the Government provided support for job-creation programmes and programmes for those entering the job market, but there was no particular policy for women. Men represented 65 to 70 per cent of all self-employed persons.

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31. Earlier retirement for women than for men had been seen as a way to recognize and remunerate women's double burden of full-time employment along with responsibilities for child care, caring for the elderly and the households. At any rate, earlier retirement was not the cause of lower pensions for women: the pension system compensated 35 years of service for women at the same level as 40 years for men. Maternity leave and parental leave were fully paid and recognized as ordinary service time, and therefore did not affect the level of pension. One of the proposed amendments to the new labour legislation would equalize retirement ages for women and men.

32. With regard to the use of language in announcements of job vacancies, non-sexist use of language was recognized not only as a right but as an obligation. The Office for Women's Policies had organized a round table on the elimination of sexist use of language and had demanded that feminine forms for all professional titles should be established. Stereotypes in the sphere of family life and responsibility for children created a significant barrier to equal opportunity. One important goal was to change employers' views so that they would not only look on women as mothers, but would also accept that men were fathers with a full range of family responsibilities. A new proposal on parental leave would provide 105 days maternity leave to be used only by a mother, 90 days of paternity leave for a father or 180 days of parental leave to be shared between the parents.

33. Part-time work was not common in Slovenia, and the Office for Women's Policies had on several occasions stated that it opposed part-time work for persons taking parental leave in the hope of avoiding the Western European experience that it was mostly women who engaged in part-time work. Temporary employment meant employment for a fixed time period of varying duration. It applied to periods usually lasting not more than a year for both women and men. The number of women employed on a temporary basis might be higher, as that type of employee was often used to replace persons on maternity or parental leave.

34. The overall unemployment rate had grown in the period from 1986 to 1993, reaching 7.3 per cent in 1995. Since 1994, unemployment among women had increased; nevertheless, the proportion of women unemployed was still lower than that of men. Special attention would be paid to the issue of long-term unemployment (over a year). The proportion of women among long-term unemployed was 47.5 per cent. Many women had difficulty entering the labour market because of employers' expectations that they would leave their positions owing to family responsibilities.

35. Ms. NEUBAUER (Slovenia) said that she would present additional information and clarifications on questions relating to women's health (art. 12). The transition process had affected the national health insurance scheme and the health care system as a whole. Despite cutbacks, however, the share of public spending for health care had grown from 7.3 per cent of GDP in 1992 to 7.8 per cent in 1994. The share of private expenditure for health care had also increased.

36. Concerning the feminization of health care professions, the majority of health care providers were indeed female - 53.7 per cent of physicians and 63.1 per cent of dentists. Moreover, enrolment in schools of medicine,

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dentistry and pharmacy showed that women would predominate in those professions in the future. In the high school for health care professions, only 31 of the 596 students enrolled in 1995-1996, were male. The predominance of women was viewed as a reason for low wages in health care fields, and demands for higher wages and recognition of special status for medical doctors were among the causes of the April 1996 strike of dentists and doctors.

37. With regard to concerns on occupational health, the Law on Fundamental Rights and Labour Relations protected male workers under the age of 18 and all female workers from reproductive hazards. The laws on job safety were holdovers from the previous political system and gave total protection to workers as owners of the means of production. The new legislation, which was in the course of preparation, would be based on the European system.

38. Educational programmes at all levels, from primary schools to curricula for health care professionals, included education and information on violence, reproductive and sexual health issues and the health-related risks of substance abuse and addiction.

39. Age disaggregated statistics on cervical and breast cancer and cardiovascular diseases would be included in the second periodic report, as well as information on infertility. A screening programme for early detection of breast cancer was envisaged in the health care plan, which was awaiting confirmation by parliament.

40. Slovenia was experiencing difficulties in collecting data on women's health because of changes in methodology; consequently the monitoring of national trends was no longer possible. Modernization of the database would be carried out in the near future. No change had been observed in the trends of hormonal contraceptive use. The incidence of induced abortions showed a continuous decrease in all age groups and regions of Slovenia. Termination of pregnancy after 10 weeks' gestation had to be approved by a special committee of medical doctors and was permitted only if it was less dangerous to the woman than continuation of the pregnancy. Fetal sex selection was not allowed; prenatal fetal diagnosis was used when amniocentesis or blood tests were positive for genetic and neurodegenerative diseases. The average number of sterilizations had increased slightly; in 1995 there had been 2,659 requests for sterilization, over 95 per cent from women, mostly mothers of two children. Sterilization was permitted only after the age of 35.

41. Ms. KOZMIK (Slovenia) said that according to the 1991 census, almost half the population of Slovenia was living in rural areas, but the agricultural population accounted for only 7.6 per cent of the total population. The proportion of women was almost equal to that of men, and the average size of farm families was 3.7 persons. According to research on 780 farms, women owned 17.5 per cent of family farms and were co-owners of 28.2 per cent of farms.

42. In 1982, the right to maternity leave had been guaranteed to women farmers who were members of agricultural cooperatives. Under the new law on family support income, of 1993, farmers who paid old age and disability insurance contributions had the same rights to parental leave as other workers; if they did not pay contributions, they were entitled to parental benefits. Farm

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children had the same right to child benefits as other children. Women farmers had equal access with men to all types of credit.

43. In the majority of farm households, housekeeping tasks were performed by the wife. In half the households, responsibility for child care was not specified in advance or was shared among the household members. In a third of the households, childcare was the mother's job. According to data in the study "The Quality of Life", 1996, the rural population had fewer facilities than the urban population in respect of school and childcare, health care, culture and recreation, transport and communications, and food supply establishments.

44. Ms. GONZÁLEZ-MARTÍNEZ said that the statistics on the abortion rate in Slovenia showed a total for 1995 of 20.8 per cent; she asked whether that figure was a percentage of all women of child-bearing age.

45. Ms. SCHÖPP-SCHILLING said that she had some concerns about the issue of the family as a private sphere. Under socialism, there had been many encroachments into the family, and there could now be a danger of regarding the family as a completely separate entity. Slovenia must be careful to ensure that conservative policies of the Western world did not encroach on its equal opportunities legislation under cover of protecting the privacy of the family.

46. Although the large number of women judges was impressive, they would not necessarily work for equal human rights for women; women judges should be educated about the opportunity they had to go forward in solidarity with other women and review legislation to identify direct and indirect discrimination.

47. The Government of Slovenia did not seem to be concerned about the prevalence of single-parent families; however, since such families had only one income, if any, there was a risk that they would slide into poverty, especially if they were headed by women.

48. On the question of the lack of women in parliament, a massive education campaign was needed to educate women about politics; women needed to take their fate into their own hands and to understand that women's issues were political issues, not social issues.

49. Affirmative action was needed in the diplomatic service to ensure that dual appointments were made and that there was no discrimination against women with children.

50. Education was another area for affirmative action; gender-neutral structures were only a first step; greater emphasis needed to be placed on educating teachers about the problems of sexist teacher-student interactions and sexist curricula, and stereotypes must be counteracted among boys and girls. It was a matter of concern that such a high proportion of pre-school children were not enrolled in formal settings; grandmothers might provide loving care, but were likely to prolong stereotypes. Even a few hours a day of non-sexist socialization would be worthwhile to help counteract early stereotypes. She urged the Government of Slovenia to increase the number of formal child care places.

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51. The Government of Slovenia should institute heavy penalties for discrimination in employment. Further information was needed on self-employment; women should be encouraged to start up small businesses and should be taught how to do so.

52. The modernization of the database for health care must be accelerated, so that it would be possible to develop health care programmes.

53. She hoped that the Government of Slovenia would publish the Committee's concluding comments and have them discussed in the press and in parliament.

54. Ms. BARE said that on the subject of temporary employment, she was concerned that employers were tending to recruit women to fill gaps and thereby avoid paying benefits and giving promotions; that meant that women were again suffering discrimination. A study should be undertaken to see how prevalent the practice was and formulate measures to prevent its continuation.

55. Ms. Yung-Chung KIM said that the representative of Slovenia had indicated that the feminization of health care professions resulted from lower wages in that field; she asked whether the same applied to the judiciary, since wherever there were more women, wages tended to go down, and whether anything would be done to deal with that problem.

56. The CHAIRPERSON, speaking in her personal capacity, said that more information was needed about health insurance, the double burden of housework and paid employment shouldered by women, domestic violence, and whether the high proportion of women in the health care professions made health care more accessible or more affordable to women.

57. Ms. KOZMIK (Slovenia) said that her Government would prepare the second periodic report over the course of 1997 and would provide answers to all the additional questions.

58. Ms. Koman-Perenič (Slovenia), Ms. Kozmik (Slovenia) and Ms. Neubauer (Slovenia) withdrew.

WAYS AND MEANS OF EXPEDITING THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE (continued)

59. Ms. CARTWRIGHT said that now that the Committee had two sessions a year, it needed to be much more systematic and efficient in its work. It should select the reports to be considered at least one year in advance, as the experts needed to receive them sufficiently early to be able to provide comments and suggestions to the post-session working group. Questions should be formulated by the post-session working group so as to give reporting States parties and non-governmental organizations ample time to prepare for presentation. To avoid the situation of the post-session working group working hard on reports which when the time came were not actually presented, there would have to be a very clear system.

60. The analysis by the Secretariat, which at the current session had not been available until the session had started, should be much simpler than in the past; members of the Committee should be provided with concluding comments, the

full text of all reservations entered by States parties, and comments by the Secretariat on whether any reservations had been removed or amended. The analysis could then be provided well ahead of time.

61. At post-session working group meetings, the practice of not considering initial reports of States parties should be continued, otherwise there might not be sufficient time for the groups to consider all the other reports. Furthermore, there was a need to establish a good relationship with States parties making initial reports. She strongly supported the idea that members of the Committee should specialize in certain areas; each year the experts should be asked which areas they wished to specialize in, without being restricted to those areas.

62. Ms. CORTI asked for clarification of the responsibilities of a post-session working group, since the Committee had taken no decision on whether to organize a pre-session or post-session working group meeting.

63. Ms. CARTWRIGHT said that the purpose of a post-session working group meeting would be to prepare questions on the reports to be considered at the next session. Those questions would then be sent to the States parties concerned, so that the Governments and non-governmental organizations could incorporate their answers into their introductory statements before the Committee.

64. Ms. SCHÖPP-SCHILLING said that more systematic preparation on the part of both the Committee and the Division for the Advancement of Women would save time. For example, in the case of Slovenia's report, if the Committee had received the written answers to its questions ahead of time, it could have devoted the current meeting to a constructive dialogue with the Slovenian delegation instead of merely hearing the answers read out. She asked the Division for the Advancement of Women to provide Working Group I with a list of the reports that could be considered at the next two sessions and a list of all States parties whose initial reports were long overdue, along with information on what the Secretariat had done over the years to remedy that situation, such as sending reminders and offering technical assistance. That would help the Committee devise measures to deal with States parties which did not take their reporting obligations seriously.

65. Ms. GONZÁLEZ MARTÍNEZ said she agreed that having the pre-session working group meet after the session instead would give the Committee a head start on its work on the next set of reports to be considered, and that the Committee should submit its questions to States parties much further in advance. However, that change must be considered carefully, since the Committee was not autonomous, but must abide by the rules of the United Nations and work within its allotted time-frame and resources. With respect to the suggestion that the Committee members should specialize in certain articles of the Convention, she agreed that such a division of labour could expedite the Committee's work and ensure adequate coverage of all articles. However, many of the articles dealt with issues which were interconnected and could not be clearly separated, such as health, violence and education. The Committee should consider the system used by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, which submitted its questions and comments on the initial reports of States parties five to six months before

its session, thus enabling those States to send their replies ahead of time so that they could be translated and studied by the Committee members. That system could also be used for subsequent periodic reports of States.

66. Ms. FERRER GÓMEZ said that she had doubts about the advantages of specializing by articles, since nearly all of the articles of the Convention were interconnected. Such an approach could impoverish the Committee's analysis of the implementation of each article. Instead of dividing up the articles among the Committee members, it would be better to allow members who took a special interest in certain areas to focus on those issues.

67. Ms. SHALEV said she agreed that all human rights were indivisible and interconnected. However, as the Committee was the largest of all the human rights treaty bodies, it ran the greatest risk of repetition in its questions to reporting States. Specialization would not impoverish the discussions, since its purpose was to focus the analyses and make better use of the Committee's time by ensuring that comments and questions were not repeated; Committee members would still be free to relate their areas of specialization to other articles if they wished, and to speak on any points which were of special interest in the context of a given country report.

68. Ms. OUEDRAOGO said that more discussion was needed before the Committee could decide whether to adopt the proposal to specialize by articles of the Convention. In her years on the Committee, she had noticed that too much time was spent on the presentation of periodic reports, to the detriment of constructive dialogue. She hoped that the proposal to organize a post-session working group meeting would enable States to submit their answers to the Committee's questions in advance, so as to allow time for the issuance of translations (the lack of which limited the contributions of some Committee members) and to enable the Committee to outline the main points to be covered in the dialogue even before the reports were formally presented.

69. Ms. BUSTELO GARCÍA DEL REAL said that specialization by articles of the Convention would ensure that all articles were adequately addressed. Articles which were particularly wide-ranging, such as article 11, could be covered by more than one member of the Committee. Specialization would be a good way to organize the Committee's work to ensure that States' reports were considered systematically, rigorously and efficiently.

70. Ms. TALLAWY said that the Committee could not hold both pre-session and post-session working group meetings, since its budget provided for only one such meeting per session. Since the working group had already met prior to the current session, the Committee would have to find a non-traditional way to prepare its questions on the reports to be considered at the July session, so that replies would be received far enough in advance. Subsequently, it could organize post-session working group meetings on a regular basis.

71. She agreed that there was a need for more real dialogue with States parties, as the current system of posing questions and later hearing the answers read out at length was monotonous and did not allow for much substantive interaction with Governments. She supported the idea of specialization, since it would focus the Committee members' efforts and enable them to explore the

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whole range of problems and questions in each area. In addition, some members could be in charge of making general observations and asking questions on each country's overall legal framework and reservations to the Convention, while other members could be responsible for examining the replies of non-governmental organizations and specialized agencies.

72. Ms. ACAR said that the idea of specialization was attractive, but could force the Committee to devote equal time and effort to every article in the context of every country report, even though the areas requiring attention varied by country. She hoped that the Committee could devise a way to overcome that problem.

73. Ms. SCHÖPP-SCHILLING said that the question of which areas to target in each periodic report could be determined on the basis of the issues identified at the pre-session or post-session working group meetings. That would ensure that the Committee did not waste time examining areas which were not problematic in a given country. Once the priority areas for each country had been determined, the relevant articles would be allocated to the Committee members.

74. Ms. CORTI said she agreed that Working Group I must begin as soon as possible to consider the list of countries to be covered at the next session.

75. Ms. TALLAWY said that Working Group I would need not only the list of countries, but also a list of the ideas proposed at the current meeting and possible procedures for submitting questions to States parties and receiving replies prior to the July 1997 session.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.

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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

Sixteenth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 322nd MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 21 January 1997, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. KHAN

CONTENTS

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION (continued)

IMPLEMENTATION OF ARTICLE 21 OF THE CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN (continued)

WAYS AND MEANS OF EXPEDITING THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE (continued)

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Any corrections to the records of the meetings of this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION (continued)

Combined initial, second and third periodic reports of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (continued) (CEDAW/C/STV/1-3 and Add.1)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms. Ollivierre (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) took a place at the Committee table.

2. Ms. OLLIVIERRE (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines), responding to comments and questions by members of the Committee, said, with regard to female migration, that there had been no survey of the causes of the phenomenon or of ways to address it. Such an approach could, however, be considered by the Government, and covered in the next report. The fact that more women than men migrated was due to the fact that it was easier for women to obtain jobs in the tourism and domestic service sectors. The question of measures to reintegrate female migrants on their return to the country would also be dealt with in the next report. There was, in addition, internal migration; for example, both men and women from rural areas of the mainland, Saint Vincent, migrated to the Grenadine Islands to work in the construction and tourism industries, since the local population of the Grenadines was heavily engaged in the fisheries industry.

3. Regarding youth unemployment, the Government was making every effort to promote job creation and offered training in self-employment.

4. The Family Court had full jurisdiction over all family matters, except divorce. Adoption of the Family Court Act had been immediately followed by a national information programme, carried out by the Department of Women's Affairs and the Department of Legal Affairs in collaboration with the National Council of Women. The programme, involving community groups, schools, public servants and the police, had covered the Court's structure, role and mandate. The Family Court provided counselling to perpetrators and victims, with follow-up by welfare and probation officers. The programme also covered prison inmates. Legal aid and counselling were available through the Court, and the Government had established a network of lawyers working pro bono on behalf of women in need of protection from violence or seeking to establish property rights.

5. The Family Court was autonomous in structure, and its President was directly responsible to the Attorney General, the relevant policy-maker. The establishment of the Family Court had been very positively received by the women of Saint Vincent.

6. No shelters were available for victims of family violence, since the population of the country was small enough that their welfare could be entrusted to family and friends.

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7. Turning to articles 1 to 3, she said that the Constitution and judicial system did not allow the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, or any other convention, to be directly incorporated into legislation, so that the High Court would not emphasize its provisions. Nevertheless, previous cases involving discrimination could be cited. The Department of Women's Affairs was not, however, aware of any case before the High Court for discriminatory practices by either men or women. A committee had been set up to review the Constitution.

8. While there was no specific legislation prohibiting discrimination against women, the Government made every effort to enact legislation which promoted gender equality. That approach was apparent in a number of measures, such as the Equal Pay Act and the Citizenship Act.

9. Regarding article 4, she noted that the Department of Women's Affairs had been established as a result of action by the women's movement, particularly the National Council of Women, in the 1980s. It reflected the Government's commitment to the advancement of women. Its mandate was to remove all discrimination against women, to promote the achievement of their full potential and to ensure their integration in the country's development. The Department had some autonomy within the Ministry of Education, Culture and Women's Affairs, and its Director advised the Government, through the responsible Minister, on policy decisions. The National Commission on the Status of Women, bringing together governmental, non-governmental and private sector participants, had an advisory role.

10. The Department of Women's Affairs and the National Council of Women worked in close collaboration on policy development and implementation. The Department had its own allocation for training and programme implementation. Its 1997 work programme included action to implement the Beijing Platform for Action and other international commitments through mechanisms for the advancement of women. Specifically, the Department would focus on mainstreaming gender policies through focal points in ministries and through community groups and organizations, would promote equality before the law in power sharing and decision-making, and would focus on women in social, cultural and economic life. The emphasis in 1996 had been on empowering women to overcome poverty through education and training.

11. With regard to article 5, social sensitization on gender issues and stereotyping were being addressed at the school level, with both boys and girls being exposed to similar discipline and training. Community action and information activities were also being undertaken.

12. A non-governmental organization, the National Committee against Violence, had addressed the issue of violence and had conducted information and publicity campaigns, making use of both radio and television. A Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women was commemorated every year in November, and from October to December the Department of Women's Affairs focused on such activities as information seminars, involving community groups and schools, radio and television programmes, a report on activities by the Department, church activities and rallies on issues relating to violence. Responsibility for

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monitoring violence against women lay with the police, although the Department of Women's Affairs had a key role in addressing the broader issue.

13. With regard to teenage mothers and gender stereotyping, the Government was conducting an experiment to allow both rural and urban teenage mothers to return to school, although many chose to continue their education outside the school system. The Ministry of Health provided parenting training for both sexes and conducted sessions on gender stereotyping. While teenage mothers were not under pressure to leave the formal school system, there was sometimes societal pressure, in which case the Department of Women's Affairs and other government organs could act as mediators.

14. No study had been conducted of whether there were customs or practices damaging the status of women in the family.

15. With respect to efforts to educate the police and judges, programmes to make women aware of the relevant legislation had been undertaken since 1986. The Department of Women's Affairs was currently preparing a text on legislation, explaining the relevant laws and mechanisms. It was hoped that the text would serve as a reference for social and community groups and for government agencies. In that regard, complaints by women that the legislation enacted was not working effectively had been considered at various levels. The insensitivity of male judges was a specific concern to women in Saint Vincent and throughout the world.

16. The Government was seeking to address family life education at all levels, but changes in attitudes were slow. There was need for more family planning. The Government intended to continue its efforts to address the gap between political will and social conditions.

17. Under the Domestic Violence Bill criminal action in the High Court or Family Court could be initiated by either spouse for a protection order, or an occupation order entitling the victim to occupy the household and exclude the abuser. There was also provision for counselling and, in the case of injunctions, the power of arrest.

18. The maintenance of the children of teenage mothers was handled through the courts, which determined the amount of payments and oversaw their collection. Dowry, not being practised in Saint Vincent, was not a factor in violence against women.

19. Turning to article 6, she said that there was no research on traffic in women and prostitution. The issue would be addressed in the next report.

20. Regarding the involvement of women in public and political life, pursuant to article 7, women were active as mobilizers, campaign managers and activists, and could influence party candidacies. Each of the two political parties had a women's committee, so that women were able to ensure that the parties addressed their concerns. It was now up to women working within their parties to see that their power was reflected in Parliament. The use of affirmative action in connection with women's involvement in politics was now under discussion, but women were saying they preferred quality over quantity.

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21. On citizenship for foreign spouses of nationals in connection with article 9, there was no longer any discriminatory practice, and all foreign spouses, men and women, were subject to the same procedures when applying for nationality.

22. She then turned to questions regarding article 10 of the Convention. Concerning possible measures to correct the fact that most school principals were men, she said that the Government had been addressing the situation, but that promotions and appointments were decided on merit, training, experience and seniority. Since the submission of the report, however, the percentage of female school principals had increased; more information would be prov[illegible]d in the next report.

23. Human rights education was not taught as a separate subject but was included in the social studies curriculum; for example, the Convention on the Rights of the Child was thoroughly discussed, particularly at the secondary level and in student councils and youth forums. Referring to the question as to whether young women took advantage of opportunities to participate in sports, she said that the young women of her country were very fond of sports and were very active in that respect.

24. Leadership training programmes were organized for out-of-school youths and other vulnerable groups; there were also skills training programmes offered by various government departments. During their training, young people were placed in apprenticeships, and their subsequent employment was often arranged during that time. However, not all trainees were absorbed and, as a result, some became self-employed.

25. The Department of Women's Affairs had the main responsibility for organizing gender-sensitivity training in the public sector. Every effort had been made at the secondary and tertiary education levels, but nothing had so far been done at the primary and pre-primary levels. It was the policy of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Women's Affairs that priority should be given to children aged 11 and above. Some thought could be given to extending the programme to children under 11; the next report would describe any measures taken in that respect.

26. A question had been asked on the role of churches in preventing teenage pregnancies. Although all the churches in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines were aware of the need for such programmes they did not play a significant role in that respect. As to the ratio of boys to girls in coeducational schools, the Ministry compiled yearly statistics on student numbers in each educational institution, but there were no separate data on coeducational and non-coeducational schools. The Government would provide information on the subject in its next report. Referring to the question as to why more girls than boys graduated from the educational system, she said that it was well known that girls matured faster than boys; in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, girls were more serious and responsible, and they applied themselves much more in the academic field, whereas boys often chose to drop out of the system. Also, the women's movement gave young women considerable encouragement to take full advantage of educational opportunities.

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27. A member of the Committee had asked why there were four non-coeducational schools. Two of those schools were privately owned and run by the Roman Catholic Church, one for boys and one for girls. The other two schools, which were Government-owned and managed, had been founded during the colonial period. All four were generally considered to be the "cream" of the educational system, and were attended by students from all levels of society.

28. Concerning programmes for literacy among schoolchildren, she said that there were no separate programmes for boys and girls; basic literacy and numeracy were taught at primary schools, and students were expected to be literate and numerate when they began secondary school. Specialist teachers were available at the primary level to assist children with reading disabilities.

29. Referring to questions on article 11, she said that the Equal Pay Act covered all workers, in both private and public sectors. Its implementation was the responsibility of a Labour Commissioner employed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Labour. Persons working in the informal sector were often self-employed, and their employees tended to be family members; however, if there was any dissatisfaction, the usual procedure would apply in seeking redress under the Act. Any employer convicted of contravening the Act was liable to pay a fine of $2,000, and if the employer persisted, he would then be liable for a fine of $100 for each day the offence continued.

30. There were regulations to monitor health and safety in the "free zones". The appropriate trade union and the Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Labour monitored compliance with the regulations. The Government was attempting to address the high level of unemployment among young women and rural women by offering skills training in different areas such as non-traditional professions and the hospitality industry. There was a need to further explore the manufacturing sector, and every effort was being made in that direction.

31. The Department of Women's Affairs was not aware of any habitual friction between customs officers and women traders, although there were times when officers had to be extremely vigilant, and specific reports had been investigated. The traders usually had a very good relationship with the customs officers and were treated very kindly; indeed, taxes and import duties were often not collected in full, due to the particularly friendly relations between the two groups. Female traders were considered to be the lifeblood of trade among the islands, and the Government supported their initiative.

32. It would be difficult to include women's work in agriculture and the informal sector in Government statistics on the gross domestic product, since data collection would be a very difficult task. The matter was, however, being considered by the Caribbean Community, and a programme would shortly be implemented in Trinidad and Tobago; Saint Vincent and the Grenadines hoped to learn from and adapt any useful experience derived from that programme.

33. Health and safety measures were embodied in labour legislation. Trade unions representing workers in the "free zones", and government labour inspectors visited workplaces to carry out spot checks and ensure that health and safety regulations were adhered to. Women made up the bulk of the trade

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union movement in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Trade unions did not give any particular preference to either sex, since their purpose was to protect and seek justice for all their members, male and female.

34. The Labour Code was monitored by the Labour Commission and by the trade unions; non-compliance with the Code could be dealt with through the Commission or through the courts of law.

35. Subjects covered by the family life education programme included parenting, interpersonal relationships, family planning and sex education; the programme was available to men, women and adolescents. Adults and young people could obtain contraceptives through health centres, district clinics or the National Family Planning Programme. Information and counselling on family planning and contraception was provided by the Programme and by the Ministry of Health. A great deal of information on those matters was available; although the population was well informed concerning contraceptive methods, the problem often lay in putting that knowledge into practice. In many cases, women wished to use contraceptives but did not do so because their partners objected. However, women were increasingly demanding that their partners should use condoms, due to the increase in cases of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). The process of change was, however, a long and slow one, and faster progress would be desirable.

36. Abortion was illegal in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. If doctors performed abortions, they did so without the knowledge of the Government, and so far, no women had reported any such occurrences to the relevant authorities. Termination of pregnancy was permitted only if the mother's life was in danger or if the pregnancy resulted from rape or incest.

37. Prenatal care was provided by all clinics and health centres in the country. Adequate information on HIV/AIDS was provided to teachers, students and parents, by means of clinics, schools, community groups, radio, television and pamphlets. All programmes on AIDS had addressed the issue of responsible sexual behaviour.

38. A question had been asked concerning the husband's consent which was required for a tubal ligation operation to be carried out on a woman. She pointed out that written consent from a spouse or next of kin was required for any surgery, and the same rule would therefore apply to a man wishing to have a vasectomy. Papanicolaou tests were available to all women at clinics and health centres, as were mammograms, both at Government expense. There was a cancer prevention programme, and breast self-examination was widely taught.

39. Turning to article 14, and referring to a question about terms of payment for the 35 per cent of farms that had been leased to rural women, she said the latter were expected to use the land for crop production, and once the crops were sold, to make regular payments to the Government. The repayment period was 15 to 20 years. The Government had also established credit schemes for rural farmers, most of whom were women, and a soft loan scheme for low-income farmers had been established through the national bank.

40. A question had been asked regarding measures to improve access to pre-school education in rural areas. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) provided personnel via the Ministry of Education, Culture and Women's Affairs to assist with organizing and managing pre-school education. Pre-school centres were given a grant of $100 a month by the Government, and milk and other basic items were provided through the school feeding programme. However all pre-school centres were owned and operated privately. As to social security programmes for rural women, persons who were destitute received a monthly allowance from the Government, medical and dental care were provided free of charge, and assistance was given in the form of building materials and labour, school books, school uniforms and transportation.

41. Women had the right to own land or property in their own name, whether they were single or married. Legal protection from domestic violence applied equally to married women and to those in common-law relationships. However, the Government had no authority to tell anyone whom or when to marry; people were free to enter and leave relationships as they pleased, and forced marriages or unions were against the law. Women took full advantage of their legal rights in respect of marriage and of property ownership.

42. An unmarried woman could be allowed to adopt or be awarded guardianship of a child under the Adoption Act, provided that she was not shown to be an abuser or medically unfit. As for the compulsory registration of marriages, any person wishing to marry must first make an application; once that was granted and the marriage had been solemnized, it must be registered with the government registrar.

43. The law provided for equal sharing of marital property on the dissolution of the marriage. The information that had been requested concerning the texts of the relevant legislation in that respect would be forwarded to the Committee and would be referred to in the Government's next report.

44. Ms. ABAKA congratulated the representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines for the excellent and candid responses she had given to the Committee's questions. The Government should review its policy concerning shelters for women who were victims of domestic violence, despite the existence of the excellent tradition of the extended family, which often provided shelter to those who needed it. A second look at the Government's policy on affirmative action would also be desirable. Affirmative action did not lower standards; it put women in a position to be as effective as possible in the professional positions in which they were placed, particularly decision-making positions.

45. Ms. SHALEV said that the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines might wish to re-examine its Family Life Education programmes from a gender perspective, in order to more fully address the problem of cultural stereotyping and issues of gender relations. She expressed concern that the consent requirement for medical procedures infringed on the autonomy and human rights of patients; she urged the Government to re-evaluate its legislation in that area so as to ensure full patient autonomy in medical treatment.

46. Ms. BUSTELO GARCÍA DEL REAL supported the suggestion voiced by Ms. Shalev regarding the Family Life Education programmes, and suggested that the

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programmes should include treatment of equal relations between men and women, as well as of aspects of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, in order to rectify stereotypes and combat violence against women. She asked for the Government's confirmation, in the form of research studies, that women of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines were not victims of trafficking or violence in the context of prostitution. She suggested that Government statistics on gross domestic product (GDP) should take account of unpaid work, as most such work was done by women and represented a significant contribution to the overall economy. With regard to violence against women, she suggested that the Government take General Recommendation No. 19 into account, as well as the work of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women, as mandated by the Commission on Human Rights. She also requested further clarification of the consent requirements for medical procedures.

47. Ms. FERRER GÓMEZ asked for more thorough study of the emigration of women, citing the need to verify the causes of such emigration and its implications for the women involved. In the area of training, she suggested that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women should be more widely disseminated among members of the legal and other professions; more effort should also be made to familiarize women with their rights as affected by new laws and amendments. Moreover, members of the news media and the professions should be made more aware of harmful gender-related stereotypes and cultural patterns.

48. Ms. GONZÁLEZ MARTÍNEZ said that, with regard to the consent requirements for medical procedures, there was often a legitimate need for a second party or relative to be consulted regarding such procedures, especially in emergency cases.

49. Ms. JAVATE DE DIOS said, with regard to the question of emigration, that the Government should examine trends in emigration over time, as well as the process of recruitment for emigrants and the benefit, if any, of the remittances such emigrants were sending home. She also requested more information about the impact of emigration on the relatives and children of the women involved, and its effect on the self-image of those women. She wished to know if and how the Government was monitoring emigration, and what policies it was formulating to deal with the phenomenon. In the area of family planning and sex education, she cited the need to address male sexual behaviour and job training for teenage girls.

50. The CHAIRPERSON joined previous speakers in citing the need to include unpaid domestic workers in GDP statistics, as the non-recognition of women's contribution to the economy in that area tended to exacerbate their subordinate and dependent status. She also suggested that the Government's next report should include more information on follow-up actions to the Fourth World Conference on Women, as well as such major concerns as domestic violence and trafficking in women and girls.

51. Ms. Ollivierre (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) withdrew.

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IMPLEMENTATION OF ARTICLE 21 OF THE CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN (continued)

WAYS AND MENS OF EXPEDITING THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE (continued)

52. Ms. BUSTELO GARCÍA DEL REAL, speaking in her capacity as focal point for the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, said that that Committee had met on two occasions in Geneva during 1996 and had considered the reports of Belarus, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Finland, Guatemala, Guinea, Hong Kong, Macao, Paraguay, Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. In its final observations regarding the implementation of women's rights, that Committee had recommended that Guatemala should modify certain articles of its Civil Code that were considered discriminatory towards women and that the Government of Guatemala should take steps to do away with traditional stereotypes that fostered the notion of the inferiority of women. Spain had been requested to take measures to preserve equal pay for equal work and to reduce the high rate of unemployment for women. El Salvador had been asked to take measures to combat violence against women, to revise its penal and civil codes and to ensure equal pay for equal work.

53. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights had noted the high rate of maternal mortality and the lack of family-planning counselling in Paraguay; it had requested the Government to take measures to combat violence against women in general; and it had called for study of the special situation of indigenous women there. Hong Kong had been asked to revise existing gender-biased laws. Belarus had been requested to adopt new legislation to prevent discrimination against women with regard to employment. Finland had been asked to adopt more effective measures to ensure equal pay for equal work and to provide more complete statistics on domestic violence. That Committee had also expressed particular concern regarding sex tourism in the Dominican Republic and had called for a series of measures to combat the serious discrimination against women it had noted there.

54. In the context of the need for enhanced coordination among the various bodies involved in human rights, she said that the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights regularly received information from non-governmental organizations. That Committee had also discussed several drafts of the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, but had not reached a consensus. It would be useful for CEDAW to know whether such a consensus had eventually been reached, and she requested the Secretariat to obtain that information by the time the Committee began considering the Optional Protocol to its own Convention. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights was also preparing revised guidelines on the presentation of reports, in order to reflect the results of the World Summit for Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women. CEDAW could also make suggestions as to what it considered important for inclusion in those guidelines.

55. Ms. SATO, speaking in her capacity as the focal point for the activities of the International Labour Organization (ILO), said that during 1996, ILO had addressed three important issues concerning women: the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women; child labour; and unremunerated domestic work.

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56. In March 1996, the Governing Body of ILO had approved proposals to give effect to the Declaration and Platform for Action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women. Seven of the 12 critical areas of concern identified in the Platform were closely linked to the ILO mandate. Those areas included the feminization of poverty, inequality between men and women in education and training, economic participation by women and promotion of the rights of women and of the girl child. The Governing Body of ILO had approved a plan of action which focused on three goals: productive employment and poverty eradication; working conditions and social protection; and international labour standards and normative action on women workers.

57. The Governing Body had also decided to include an item on child labour in the agenda of the eighty-sixth session of the International Labour Conference to be held in Geneva in 1998, with a view to developing a new international instrument on child labour. The proposed instrument would target for elimination of such exploitative forms of child labour as bondage, sexual slavery and child pornography.

58. With regard to home work, the eighty-third International Labour Conference had adopted a Convention and a Recommendation, which contained the first comprehensive international standards in favour of homeworkers, a growing but often invisible workforce which was largely unrecognized in labour statistics and unprotected by legislation. The Convention would oblige States parties to adopt, implement and periodically review a national policy on home work aimed at improving the situation of homeworkers in such areas as occupational safety and health, social security, maternity benefits, training and remuneration. The Convention, which created a binding international obligation on States that ratified it, also called on Governments to include homeworkers in labour statistics and labour inspection systems. For its part, the Recommendation contained guidelines on how the national policy on home work should be implemented.

59. Ms. GONZÁLEZ MARTÍNEZ said that the oral reports just presented should be made available to members in writing in order to facilitate their consideration. Following up on the report by Ms. Bustelo García del Real, she asked whether the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights had decided on its list of country reports for 1997 and whether there were any other specific references to the rights of women in country reports other than the ones cited. She also wondered whether the Committee should not look into the possibility of developing a single reporting format that would cover reports by States to all human rights treaty bodies. The Committee should also be mindful of the impact on submitting States of too frequent changes in its reporting guidelines.

60. Ms. BUSTELO GARCÍA DEL REAL said that most of the country reports contained references to the rights of women. It would be premature to consider a single report for all human rights treaty bodies. While the possibility did exist that information concerning discrimination against women might also be submitted to other treaty bodies, to date that had not occurred. In any event, the proposal could be considered further in Working Group I. Since the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights was revising its guidelines for country reports, the Committee should advise them on those areas of concern to women.

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61. Ms. BARE sought further clarification from Ms. Bustelo García del Real of the basis for the selection of the non-governmental organizations which provided information to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the manner in which such information was communicated.

62. Ms. CORTI noted that the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights was not the only body concerned with gender equality. Cooperation among the various human rights treaty bodies was ensured by the chairpersons, who made available to the other treaty bodies reports on the activities and methods of work of each treaty body. The point made by Ms. González concerning the harmonization of reporting guidelines among the various human rights treaty bodies was a valid one. Indeed, not only reporting guidelines but also policies must be reviewed in order to ensure greater harmonization of the work of the bodies concerned. She too would be interested to know how non-governmental organizations were selected, what kind of information they provided and how that information was used by the Committee.

63. Ms. TALLAWY said that, since the Committee was charged with monitoring the implementation of the Convention, it should first of all examine ways of making its work less boring and more dynamic and creative. It must therefore develop strategies for structuring its questioning that were tailored to the individual circumstances of each reporting State. The same questions, for example, could not be put to States in which the human rights situations of women were widely disparate. It would also be helpful if not only those experts who attended the pre-session meetings but all members of the Committee participated in the preparation of strategies and questions. She also wished to reiterate her views on the need for specialization by the various experts so that questions could be more sharply focused within the context of a pre-defined strategy.

64. Ms. ESTRADA CASTILLO said that she shared the views just expressed by Ms. Tallawy. It was important for the Committee to change the way in which it related to Governments and to devise strategies aimed at the specific situation of women in each reporting State. Specialization on the part of experts could only enhance the political weight of the Committee and the authority and influence which it commanded with the State party, since issues could be examined in greater depth and unnecessarily repetitive questioning prevented.

65. Ms. CORTI said that she felt obliged to counter the impression that the Committee did not know how to do its work. Members had consistently exhibited the maturity necessary to adapt their questions to the realities of the different reporting States. She agreed that the Committee and its work were constantly evolving and that its methods of work must therefore be continually adapted to those changes. However, much had already been done, such as the increase in the number of sessions from one to two each year, and it was not necessary, in her view, to change the strategy which the Committee had followed so far with success. It had not been possible in the past for meetings to be arranged between the Committee and interested non-governmental organizations, since only one annual session was held. There might be room for change in the manner in which reports were considered. The prepared responses to previous questions were often too lengthy and taxed the attention span of members. She wondered if it might be possible to do away with the oral presentations by beginning the consideration of reports in the form of a dialogue with the

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Government representatives. It might be helpful to look at the practice of other treaty bodies in that regard.

66. Ms. JAVATE DE DIOS, supported by the CHAIRPERSON, suggested that members might wish to save further comments for the meeting of Working Group I, which would be examining in greater detail the topic of ways and means of expediting the work of the Committee.

67. Ms. TALLAWY said that, in order to facilitate the work of Working Group I on the topic under discussion, the Secretariat should make available in writing the methods of work that were used by other human rights treaty bodies. She also wondered if it was possible to arrange an informal meeting with interested non-governmental organizations before the conclusion of the current session. Her earlier remarks about the need to revise the Committee's strategies should not be taken to mean that the Committee's strategies had been unsuccessful in the past. She had simply wanted to stress the need for continuous improvements in the Committee's method of work and for the adoption of strategies designed to enhance the effectiveness of its work.

68. The CHAIRPERSON recalled that an informal meeting had already been held the previous week with representatives of non-governmental organizations.

69. Ms. BUSTELO GARCÍA DEL REAL said that the Committee received oral and written information from certain non-governmental organizations. She had sought clarification from the Secretariat about the relationship between such organizations and the Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights, but no information had been forthcoming. On a personal note, she believed that of all the human rights treaty bodies the work of CEDAW was the most effective.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.

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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

Sixteenth session

SUMMARY OF THE 323rd MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 22 January 1997, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. KHAN

CONTENTS

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION (*continued*)

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The meeting was called to order at 10:30 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION (continued)

Introduction of the third periodic report of Venezuela (CEDAW/C/VEN/3)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms. Martínez and Ms. Guzmán (Venezuela) took places at the Committee table.

2. Ms. MARTÍNEZ (Venezuela) said that the struggle for women's rights in Venezuela had been particularly long and arduous because the fruits of economic progress were so uneveny distributed. The current report (CEDAW/C/VEN/3), which covered the period from 1989 to 1995, summarized the progress made in protecting the rights of Venezuelan women during that period.

3. The economic dislocations of the "lost decade" had had a severe impact on women and had forced them to seek new channels of participation in society. Venezuela's report, which sought to describe the emergence of the phenomenon of women as new players in society, had been submitted to the Committee by the National Women's Council (CONAMU). Regrettably, the Committee's comments and requests for clarification thereon had been received only a few days before the current meeting, and the Government had therefore not had time to prepare appropriate responses to the questions raised. She hoped that in future the Committee would avoid placing States parties in the position of having to prepare responses to detailed questions in a few short days in order to accommodate the committee's programme of work.

4. By way of background information, she said that Venezuela's population of approximately 21 million had increased at an annual rate of 2.6 per cent, the highest in Latin America. Women accounted for 49.56 per cent of the population. Among the main objectives of the country's Ninth National Plan were to promote the social and economic integration of all Venezuelans, combat the phenomenon of exclusion and reduce poverty by redressing the inequalities which women still faced. The Plan emphasized the importance of the gender perspective to the maintenance of democracy. Inflation in the national economy had led to declining real wages and public-sector unemployment, which affected mainly women. despite those difficulties, women were increasingly becoming the primary means of support for their households.

5. During the period under review, a number of legislative measures had been taken in the areas of education, violence against women, employment and health care, with the aim of eliminating discrimination against women and promoting their advancement. Those measures included the reform of the Equal Opportunities for Women Act, the development of programmes to combat violence and criminal behaviour among school age children and the introduction of programmes outside the traditional institutions aimed at mitigating the "social cost of adjustment".

6. Despite those achievements, the view of poverty and, in particular, of the situation of women living in poverty remained incomplete. The country still lacked a comprehensive social policy directed at women and not merely in their

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capacity as mothers or heads of households. There was also a disregard for aspects of training and the development of skills aimed at achieving higher literacy rates and standards of proficiency in non-traditional occupations. Finally, programmes were still lacking to develop women's self-esteem as a tool for their personal, job-related and social advancement.

7. Turning to the historical record of developments in the status of women in Venezuela, she noted that the first reform of the Civil Code had been introduced in 1942, under which women had been granted citizenship. Women had gained the right to vote in 1946, and the 1961 Constitution had established equality and greater opportunities for access to the educational system, thereby contributing to a steady increase in the participation of women in the decision-making process. In 1964, the first woman Minister of State had been appointed. Since then, the representation of women in other government posts, including the judiciary,had been increasing. Their advancement in the legislative branch and in the trade unions, however, had been slow.

8. Following the establishment in 1974 of the first Women's Advisory Commission to the office of the President women's involvement and advancement in high-level public affairs had made considerable headway. In 1984,the National Office for Women's Affairs had been created and, three years later, the Ministry of Youth had been transformed into the Ministry of the Family, and the Sectoral office for the Advancement of Women had been set up as the principal government agency responsible for developing programmes and projects aimed at increasing the effective participation of women in the socio-economic, cultural and political field and at promoting their social and political rights. A woman Minister for the Advancement of Women had been appointed in 1989 with the tasks of coordinating and implementing programmes designed to promote women's participation in all spheres.

9. Subsequently, in 1990, the Employment Organization Act had been passed, which had greatly improved the situation of women in employment. Based on a proposal by Venezuela, the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women had been adopted at the twenty-fourth regular session of the Organization of American States with a view to establishing an international legal instrument aimed at rectifying the serious situation of physical abuse, of which there were countless female victims in Latin America.

10. With regard to the domestic application of the articles of the Convention, the substantive law prevailing in Venezuela contained no discriminatory provisions against the exercise of political rights which prevented women from taking an active role in Government. The Constitution and the strengthening of the democratic system had made it possible to five expression to the principle of equality and liberty with regard to women's civil rights. In 1982, reforms had been introduced to the Civil Code based on the concept of equal family responsibilities and aimed at imbuing the family, as the basic unit of society, with a greater sense of economic, moral, social and legal solidarity. Articles 140, 137 and 160 of the Code provided for equality of spouses before the law in such areas as decisions relating to family life, rights and obligations, and marital property regimes.

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11. Parents had equal authority over their children under the law. problems could arise where one spouse objected to exercise of such authority by the other, particularly in the case of identification at airports. However, either parent could travel with the children. The question was being considered further.

12. She drew attention to paragraphs 77 and 78 of the report, dealing with the Penal Code Reform Bill and the Sexual and Domestic Violence Bill.

13. Regarding special measures to achieve equality between men and women, the Employment Organization Act had laid down new provisions for the protection of maternity. Specifically, women had increased leave, and security of job tenure for a year. fathers also had the right to a few days absence from work in connection with the birth of their children. adoptive mothers enjoyed the same rights as biological mothers.

14. Stereotypes were perpetuated by the family, schools and the media. The National Women's Council (CONAMU) was currently reviewing textbooks with a view to countering sexual stereotyping. CONAMU was also supporting a campaign on national education for equality.

15. There were no legal obstacles to women's involvement in political life, and women were playing a greater role in political parties. Affirmative action was being introduced to required parties to establish quotas. Women's participation in legislative assemblies had fallen, however, as indicated in paragraph 118 of the report.

16. The CHAIRPERSON invited the representative of Venezuela to respond to specific comments and questions by members of the Committee (CEDAW/C/1997/CRP.1/Add.5) and appealed to her to be brief and specific.

17. Ms. MARTÍNEZ (Venezuela), responding to comments and questions by embers of the Committee, said that cases of ill-treatment of migrant and indigenous men and women in border areas were dealt with through the normal court system. There was no special mechanism to protect the right of migrant and indigenous women to maintain their cultural traditions.

18. The change, under the Equal Opportunities for Women Act, from a Ministry Women's Affairs to an Independent Women's Institute had not been in any way prejudicial. The Institute enjoyed legal autonomy.

19. The CONAMU advisory commissions supported initiatives by governmental and non-governmental organizations to improve women's health in connection with pregnancy as well as sexually transmitted and other diseases. The commissions also promoted inclusion of a gender component in education, and monitoring of the implementation of the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women. CONAMU participated in the "commitment to life" programme aimed at establishing national health policies and goals, in collaboration with governmental and non-governmental organizations and international agencies.

20. With regard to women and education, CONAMU, under the "Education for equality" programme, had convened conferences to raise awareness of the lack of

equality for women and to promote changes in textbooks and curricula so as to eliminate stereotypes. Literacy and sexual education programmes had also been conducted.

21. In connection with women and economic activity, CONAMU had worked with various advisory commissions on forums and seminars to combat poverty, provide indigenous women with access to credit and training, analyse legislative protection for working women, provide training for teenage mothers in productive work and improve women's access to trade union leadership.

22. CONAMU was dedicated to developing a policy of social equality. That presupposed equality in the legal, political, economic, cultural, social and personal domains. Under that policy the social debt owed to women was to be repaid; relations between men and women were to be based on solidarity, cooperation and complementarity; the gender perspective was to be integrated at all levels;women were to be given greater opportunity in all areas; unpaid domestic work was to be taken into account; health, education, employment, housing, social security, cultural and legal aid programmes were to be undertaken for women; and an institutional framework to promote such policies was to be developed.

23. Ms. GUZMÁN (Venezuela), responding to comments and questions by members of the Committee, said that the objectives of the Independent Women's institute, pursuant to the Equal Opportunities for Women Act, comprised policy planning, coordination and implementation; formulation of legislation to promote women's rights; establishment of databases; provision of legal and other services and advice; public and private sector coordination; and provision of funding for programme implementation. Pursuant to the Act a national office for the Defence of Women's Rights would ensure compliance with national and international norms; propose reforms; guarantee the rights of the most vulnerable women; process complaints of violations; represent women in legal and other forums; and focus on the rights of working women.

24. Neither body had yet been established because of constitutional and legal difficulties, owing to inconsistencies between the Act and other legislative provisions.

25. Assessment of the impact of CONAMU and other government programmes was difficult, although there was some movement in various areas of concern to the advancement of women. CONAMU had concluded agreements on various forms and workshops with a number of international agencies from 1994 onwards, and further activities were planned for 1997.

26. With regard to paragraphs 83 and 86 of the report, the breaks accorded to nursing mothers were given, but no distinction was made between women living close by or far from the place of work. The provisions relating to establishment of day nurseries were also complied with.

27. The network set up by CONAMU to combat sexual and domestic violence had received assistance from governmental and non-governmental organization to implement several projects. It was financed in accordance with its statutes, with additional help from the private sector, but most of the funding had been provided by CONAMU, which also provided technical assistance and office space.

It was a national network, with regional and local branches;it was functioning effectively in the capital, but the regional sub-networks were still being set-up. The Sexual and Domestic Violence Bill mentioned in paragraph 108 had not yet become law, but was likely to do so soon since it was the object of a political consensus.

28. The continuing efforts of CONAMU to eradicate sexual stereotypes included measures to eliminate sexism in textbooks, changes in teaching methods, and sensitizing and training for teaching staff. meetings had been organized to help to dissuade the media from presenting distorted images of women.

29. Statistics showed that violence against women had increased; the complaints procedure had been simplified, and as a result the problem had become more visible. A study commissioned by CONAMU had been carried out in 1994 by the Central University of Venezuela, and some non-governmental organizations ad carried out local studies. Support for women victims of violence included immediate attention to complaints, as well as psychological, legal and, where needed, medical help. Counselling and rehabilitation were included in the medical and psychological services. The process of creating special tribunals provided for by the 1994 legislation had been slow, and very few judges were available at the national level. CONAMU had organized gender-sensitivity workshops for law enforcement officers and judges.

30. Socio-cultural attitudes that perpetuated violence against women were reflected in outdated provisions of criminal law that were out of step with the current reality of women's lives. CONAMU was running a permanent nationwide anti-violence campaign, with workshops, forums, conferences and printed materials. The only training provided to health-care professionals to help with identifying victims of domestic violence was that which was included in gender-sensitivity workshops. CONAMU was currently promoting the provision of shelters for battered women, and had asked for help from the national network to combat sexual and domestic violence. Abortion was illegal in Venezuela and was therefore not available to victims of rape and incest. Help for victims of violence was provided in urban and rural areas, without discrimination, through whatever facilities were available locally.

31. Penalties for the perpetrators, including imprisonment, were laid down in the Penal Code and were determined according to the seriousness of the offence; their effectiveness depended on the extent to which the victims reported the offences. The most severe sentence provided for was a maximum of 30 years' imprisonment for murder of a spouse. Those receiving complaints had become more sensitive thanks to workshops, directives and police training. CONAMU had made continuous efforts to make the media aware of the need to eradicate violence; the media had reacted by giving supportive coverage to the submission of the Sexual and Domestic Violence Bill to the National Congress.

32. The assertion that prostitution constituted a public health risk was justified by the promiscuity involved, which in turn led to the proliferation of sexually transmitted diseases. It was not known whether more women were working in the sex industry as a result of the structural adjustment programme. Trafficking in women and sexual exploitation took the form of deceptive advertisements, which purported to offer extremely advantageous terms of

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employment; measures to combat the phenomenon were oriented towards penalizing the deception involved.

33. There were no rehabilitation programmes for women engaged in prostitution; such behaviour was defined as an offence and was dealt with by the ordinary courts of law. Existing training and education programmes were available to prostitutes, but none were provided specifically for them. No information was available on any new projects or programmes, apart from the proposed reform of the Penal Code whereby the outdated classification of "offences against morality and family probity" would be amended to "offences against the person".

34. Women made up 6.6 per cent of the membership of the Chamber of Deputies, 6.2 per cent of the Senate, and 12.6 per cent of the legislative assemblies. The electoral system provided for representation of minority parties, but the system did not make special provision for representation of women, since they were not considered to be a "minority".

35. CONAMU had implemented programmes to promote more active participation of women in decision-making roles, providing them with the necessary training and support so that they could become real agents of change and ensure women's access to influential positions in future. For example, a workshop had been held in 1995 to prepare women candidates for the upcoming municipal elections, and a "Women in local government" programme had been organized in 1996. Women made up about 50 per cent of the grass-roots membership of political parties.

36. Historically, women had been excluded from social and political structures and had been relegated for many years to a domestic role, contributing their work to the family without any reward or social recognition. That had been the main "serious restriction" to their access to power.

37. As to women's participation in the international field, 449 women were currently serving in the diplomatic service, compared to 913 men. There were 33 women ambassadors out of a total of 139. Out of a total of 89 Venezuelan diplomatic missions in foreign countries, 11 were headed by women. As a result of government measures to encourage women to pursue careers in the foreign service, a consideration number had chosen international studies as their career option since the 1960s.

38. The statement in paragraph 154 of the report that female professional and technical workers fell predominantly within the public-sector employee and worker group had been badly worded. The reality of the situation was that despite efforts to sustain economic activity, public-sector employment had tended to decline, which affected women more than men owing to their traditionally strong representation in that sector, particularly in professional, technical and managerial posts.

39. With reference to paragraph 134, foreigners wishing to acquire Venezuelan nationality had to go through the required formalities to obtain naturalization, although if the applicant had been born in Spain or Latin America special facilities were provided. As for article 37 of the Constitution, it was intended as a positive measure in favour of foreign women marrying Venezuelan men, the object being to save them from having to go through the usual

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formalities to obtain naturalization. The Constitution dated from the year 1961, and there had been no amendments to that provision.

40. Referring to the question as to whether there was any specific programme for eradicating illiteracy among women, she said that such programmes were intended equally for women and men. As for the increase in the number of girls enrolled in the seventh to ninth grades of elementary school, there had been a change in the approach used by poor families for economic survival; since there was a need to have more family members generating income, young men left school and went out to work, whereas girls, although their household tasks did not decrease, stayed longer in the school system. No gender-disaggregated statistics were available for school dropout rates for girls and boys. As for school dropouts due to teenage pregnancies, the statistics were expected to improve as a result of the implementation of a decree issued in October 1996 to enable pregnant teenage girls to continue their studies. No concrete information was available regarding the socio-economic background of the young women concerned.

41. Official statistics showed that women made up 33.37 per cent of the wage-earning workforce in 1996. The greatest number of women workers was in the service industries sector; they received low wages, and social security coverage was inadequate unless benefits were provided through the trade unions. According to figures from the Central University of Venezuela, 30 per cent of the workforce belonged to trade unions, and 12 percent of women were members of unions. The level of unionization in areas of the labour market dominated by women, mainly the textile and food industries and the civil service, was 80 per cent. The numbers of women in high-level positions in trade unions had increased considerably.

42. Measures had been introduced to address sexual harassment and violence against women in the workplace, as a result of the campaigning by CONAMU and other bodies. The Sexual and Domestic Violence Bill currently before Congress provided for penalties for sexual harassment in the workplace and in other institutionalized contexts; penalties were laid down both for the culprit and for the employers who failed to prevent such incidents. Advisory services and legal help for the victims was available through the Ministry of Labour.

43. Ms. MARTÍNEZ (Venezuela) said that the 1992 Decree concerning child-care facilities provided for the establishment, maintenance and financing of those facilities, which in some cases were jointly funded by a number of employers. Caring for children at home could also be financed. The cost of the programme could not be given in global terms, since it depended on the number of children whose care had to be paid for by each employer and on the amount paid for the type of service provided. The amount to be paid for each child attending a facility could not exceed 38 per cent of the national minimum wage.

44. Figures were not available concerning the cost of the programme for the national and State authorities and local authorities. The employer's main obligation was to finance the service for the children of his or her employees, provided that the employee's monthly earnings did not exceed 45,000 bolívares per month. Very few child-care facilities had been opened, since many employers were unable to set up their own facilities and had therefore complied with their legal obligations by financing children's attendance at other facilities. Most

employers fell within the category of enterprises having between 20 and 50 employees. The availability of such facilities had made it easier for women to join the workforce, and the percentage of women in gainful employment had increased from 36.5 per cent in 1994 to 41.3 per cent in 1995. Employers' compliance with obligations in respect of child-care facilities was monitored by inspectors from the Ministry of Labour, and the quality of services provided was monitored by several different public bodies and government departments according to the type of facility concerned.

45. A programme was currently being prepared with a view to training women for employment in non-traditional occupations; there was also a training programme on the legal rights of women, including their rights in respect of employment. Legally, there were no barriers preventing women from occupying administrative and managerial posts. Venezuelan women were gaining ground in that traditionally male-dominated area. In the private sector, women were still paid less than men because of traditional ideas about women being inferior to men in terms of ability. Equal pay was provided for in employment legislation, which expressly prohibited discrimination on grounds of age, sex, race or creed. The only corrective measures were those provided for in that legislation.

46. The percentage of gross domestic product spent on health had been 2.86 per cent in 1992, 2.56 per cent in 1993, 2.06 per cent in 1994 and 1.89 per cent in 1995. Public expenditure on health had ben 4.73 per cent of the total Government budget for 1996, which represented a drop of 2.3 per cent compared with 1995. No figures were available as to the percentage of total health resources allocated to reproductive and sexual health services or to reducing maternal mortality rates. Programmes to reduce maternal mortality did exist, however. Emergency maternity services were available; 95 per cent of births took place in an institutional setting.

47. Some primary-care facilities, including some in indigenous areas, offered reproductive health-care services such as family planning. Cervical cancer and breast cancer were the most serious health problems for women. There was a national policy for the protection of women's rights to health and health care.

48. Government efforts to mitigate the social cost of adjustment, especially as regarded the special system of medical care and food provision for pregnant women and nursing mothers had been adversely affected by political upheavals in the early 1990s, but an economic restructuring programme had been launched in 1994 that included a series of measures to counter the negative effects of the required adjustments. The Maternal and Child Care Programme dealt with medical care and food provision for pregnant women and nursing mothers, but the allocation of multivitamins and ferrous sulphate to pregnant women had been eliminated. No distinction was made between budget allocations for health in general and those for women's health in particular, with the sole exception of those for maternal and child health.

49. The technical cooperation agreement with the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) was concluded in 1986 and basically comprised the mobilization of resources within and among countries, dissemination of technical and scientific information, training of staff, formulation of guidelines, plans and national policies, pursuit of investigations and provision of grants, courses, seminars and consultant services. Women's reproductive health was seen

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as an integral part of general reproductive health and was not limited to maternal and child care and family planning, in the context of the decentralization of health services.

50. Statistics on human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) cases were not broken down by occupation. The number of cases among prostitutes was unknown because prostitutes did not register as such; rather, they were included in the total figure for female cases. Between 1982 and 1996, 5,250 men and 1,049 women had been infected with HIV/AIDS, for a total of 6,299 cases. The Ministry of Health was developing programmes to train outreach workers, who would carry out educational activities on preventing sexually-transmitted diseases (STDs) and HIV/AIDS at the community level. There were also national campaigns and training courses for specific groups such as social workers, teachers, psychologists, students and others, radio and television programmes and press articles and a quarterly magazine on HIV/AIDS. There was a programme to teach methods of protection from and prevention of HIV/AIDS for sex workers, and 128 venereal-disease treatment facilities provided services for 313,777 prostitutes.

51. With regard to continuing structural inequalities in women's access to health that affected the poorest sectors of the population in particular, she said that the Venezuelan health system provided equal rights and opportunities for free medical care to the entire population. Obstacles to comprehensive case were toed to economic problems that hindered the provision of adequate or necessary supplies o health-care facilities. As a remedy to that situation, STD/AIDS programmes were being carried out throughout the country. An analysis was being conducted of the needs for all services provided by health-care professionals, and a series f measures was being taken to improve hospital conditions and to ensure the timely and adequate provision of the supplies needed.

52. Over the previous four years, the maternal mortality rate had grown slowly from 6.3 to 6.8 per 10,000 live births. An increase in poverty, budgetary and trade-unions problems in hospitals, nd massive, uncontrolled immigration had contributed to the rise in that rate. No disaggregated information was available for the four federal States.

53. Campaigns promoting the use of contraceptives by men had been undertaken in the media and at health centres, along with mass condom distribution and health education programmes. Women had access to free pre- and post-natal medical care in maternal and child health centres and at State clinics. Women with complications from attempted abortions had access to hospital care, which was generally free of charge.

54. The Government had promoted the shared responsibility for contraceptive use, but had done so only at the level of information campaigns. Family planning measures had been adopted as part of the reproductive health services already described. Family planning offices were located in State clinics readily accessible to the general population. More such offices were needed as a result of an increase in the need for birth control. Although, under current law, teenagers had only limited access to family planning offices, they did have access to contraceptives through non-governmental organizations. Only 14.8 per cent of women aged 15 to 19 years used contraceptives because of legal

restrictions and because of ignorance of the importance and advantages of contraception.

55. Information on family-planning techniques was disseminated publicly and privately to adolescents age 15 to 19 at educational institutions and through the media. Sexual education and information programmes existed for adolescents and were financed under the relevant articles of the government budget; there were also some non-governmental sources of financing. The family planning offices of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare provided services including promotion, prevention and care. Abortion was not legally available except to save the mother's life, and legal abortion was not covered under any national insurance scheme. The Penal Code had not been reviewed with regard to punitive measures against mother in cases of abortion. No specific measures had been adopted to implement the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, or the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women, with regard to the right of women and girl-children to control their own reproductive activity.

56. The capacity and quality of the medical care provided by family planning services had diminished as a result of the structural adjustment programme. The shortage of contraceptives, owing to budgetary limitations, was being mitigated through the activities of non-governmental organizations. Ignorance and carelessness were important factors in the low rates of contraceptive use. There was no gender discrimination regarding education for responsible parenting aimed at adolescents. Except for surgical cases, women generally did not require prior permission from their husbands to obtain family planning services.

57. Between 1982 and 1996, there had been 5,706 male cases of HIV/AIDS, including 3,383 deaths, and 593 female cases of HIV/AIDS, including 329 deaths. The primary cause of death among women was cardiovascular disease. All health-care institutions provided early detection services for cervical cancer (the papanicolaou test) and for breast cancer. Such services were available to all women needing them.

58. The Maternal and Child Centres provided a variety of services, many of which were used by women who were not mothers. Such women were never marginalized and could also avail themselves of the services of the rest of the Venezuelan network of hospitals and clinics.

59. In 1996, 27.4 per cent of rural women were illiterate. Through the National Literacy Commission, the Ministry of Education's Office of Adult Education was coordinating the elementary, functional and training-level literacy programmes being carried out by State agencies and non-governmental organizations in the rural sector. With the exception of an experimental programme carried out in two Venezuelan States in 1989 and 1990, rural working women did not have easy access to social welfare programmes. They could receive assistance from the Ministry of Health and Welfare for tropical diseases and birth control through rural clinics and dispensaries, but had no recourse to the hospitalization and specialized treatment services available in the urban sector.

60. The indigenous women of Venezuela performed a variety of tasks in their communities related to planting, harvesting and processing agricultural

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products, but were not generally employed in sectoral businesses or industries, with the exception of a few indigenous livestock operations which did include women. In other sectors, women were very poorly represented in governmental and trade-union bodies and grass-roots and non-governmental organizations. The exact percentage of indigenous women in decision-making positions in farm management was unknown, but they were indeed represented in the National Agrarian Law office, an organization providing legal support to indigenous peoples and communities.

61. No information was available regarding rural households headed by women. Statistical table 11 in the Venezuelan report showed the total number of households headed by women. Basically, those eligible to receive a rural dwelling were established family groups with incomes sufficient to meet the requirements of the programme. No information was available on the women who had been denied such dwellings. There was no discrimination against women in that process.

62. Married couples were not entitled to choose which spouse took advantage of parental leave because, under Venezuelan law, such leave was granted to the mother on the birth of a child. That practice was established under the Basic Labour Law and collective contracts.

63. With regard to protection of maternal custody of children in the case of divorce, parental authority was shared by both spouse at all times. Custody in such cases was awarded to the parent who could guarantee the best conditions for the physical and emotional development of the child; mothers could not be denied custody of children below the age of seven unless the gravity of the particular circumstances dictated otherwise. Moreover, the mother was free to travel inside and outside the country with her children. With regard to the division of jointly owned property, such joint ownership ended with the final cree of divorce, and the property had to be divided in half. Neither spouse could take action to advertise real estate or other property for sale without the authorization of the other.

64. Ms. ESTRADA CASTILLO expressed regret at the lack of specific responses to the concerns of the Committee. In view of the serious economic and social conditions reflected in the report, it appeared that Venezuela had actually taken a step backward in terms of follow-up to the Convention since 1992. The current report indicated that the recommendations of the Committee had not been followed; reforms to the Penal Code proposed in 1985 had yet to be enacted; and the Nationality Law continued to contravene the Convention. The report contained much high-flown theorizing about programmes for women but little evidence of the application of such programmes at the grass-roots level.

65. She was particularly troubled by the poor representation of women at high levels of Government, and requested confirmation of the ministerial-level status of the National Women's Council, which appeared to lack any real power to carry out its programmes and proposals.

66. The report had also failed to substantively address the Committee's specific concerns about punishment for abuses by law enforcement officers, as corruption and ineffective administration of justice harmed the social order and family relationships, particularly in regard to women. Finally, she hoped that

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future reports would reflect greater progress in the Government's efforts to comply with the Convention.

67. Ms. FERRER-GÓMEZ also expressed regret that the report contained little information regarding the results at the national level of legislation adopted and plans and proposals submitted by the National Women's Council. She had been disturbed by the deteriorating economic and social conditions resulting from the Government's structural adjustment policies and wished to know if the National Women's Council intended to develop specific programmes for the women who made up such a large percentage of the population living in poverty. She also inquired as to whether a gender perspective had been applied in the formulation of existing Government programmes to combat poverty, or if it had been possible to begin implementation of some of the poverty-eradication strategies promulgated in the Programme for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women. She inquired as to the forms and extent of Government assistance to households in poverty, most of which were headed by women, and whether the Government intended to adopt a national plan to comply with the commitments it undertook at the Fourth World Conference on Women. She also asked for clarification of the status of the Independent Women's Institute and the nature of its relationship to the National Women's Council.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.

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Sixteenth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 324TH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York
on Wednesday, 22 January 1997 at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Ms. KHAN

CONTENTS

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN (continued)

Third periodic report of Venezuela (continued) (CEDAW/C/VEN/3, CEDAW/C/1997/CRP.1/Add.5)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms. Martínez and Ms. Guzman (Venezuela) took places at the Committee table.

2. Ms. GONZÁLEZ MARTÍNEZ said that, despite the fact that Venezuela had been in the vanguard of international action to combat violence against women, it had not yet adopted its own sexual and domestic violence bill. She hoped that the active network of Venezuelan women's organizations would be able to achieve its adoption in the near future.

3. Because Venezuela had been among the first countries in its region to establish a Ministry for Women's Affairs, the information provided on that subject was of great interest. In her view, it was the sovereign right of each State party to decide on the structure of its own mechanism to promote the status of women, whether a commission, an office or a ministry. What mattered was the impact of its activities and whether progress was being made. Many countries had also experienced the restrictions Venezuela had reported due to economic crises, but she wondered whether the Government was stressing continuity in its policies and mechanisms for women, or whether they had been buffeted about by changes in Government structures.

4. Ms. BUSTELO GARCÍA DEL REAL acknowledged that the delegation of Venezuela had faced time limitations in preparing its replies to the numerous questions of the pre-session working group; that was among the reasons why the statistical data requested in the guidelines for preparation of reports would have been helpful, as it would show whether the Convention was being implemented in practice. Nevertheless, the Committee should give consideration to changing its procedures to allow States parties to receive questions earlier.

5. With regard to legislative reform and the sexual and domestic violence bill, the Committee's General Recommendation 19 and the report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, which contained a model law on violence against women, might be helpful in efforts to achieve its adoption.

6. Under the Beijing Platform for Action, the Committee had a mandate to review the legislation of States parties on abortion. The laws in Venezuela were among the most restrictive in Latin America, and the Platform might be a useful tool for opening a debate on modifying them. She found it shocking that adolescents could not obtain contraception without parental permission, which would prevent them from taking responsibility for their own sexuality. Further, the report had noted that if a foreign woman married a Venezuelan national, she could be granted Venezuelan nationality, but had not indicated whether the same was true of a foreign man who married a Venezuelan woman.

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7. For the next report, more data were needed: for example, the number of children in day care, the number of women taking advantage of cervical and breast cancer screening programmes, and more current data on women's access to education in general and access of rural women in particular, in addition to the school drop-out rate because of teenaged pregnancy.

8. With regard to the replies on article 10, it appeared that a wide range of women's organizations and individuals were aware of the importance of the Convention, yet little progress had been made in its implementation since the previous report. If that was due to a lack of effective political mechanisms and a plan of action with specific targets, the Convention itself could be extremely helpful in developing them.

9. Ms. SATO said that it would be interesting to know why more women than men migrated to cities in Venezuela, and whether better job opportunities were available to women than to men in urban areas. It appeared that, in cases of adoption, only adoptive mothers received maternity benefits and leave; she wondered what provisions had been made for adoptive fathers. The situation where women were paid less than the legal minimum wage was a serious one, and she wondered whether any penalty was imposed on employers who violated the relevant standards.

10. Ms. SHALEV said that the figures regarding the percentage of the gross national product spent on health and the national public expenditure on health as a portion of the total Government budget should be clarified, as those figures were important for monitoring compliance with the Convention. She was troubled by the indications of a decrease in expenditure on health alongside an increase in maternal mortality, and would like more information on the reasons for those trends. The response that budgetary restrictions had caused the shortage of contraceptives and that non-governmental organizations would make up the shortfall was inadequate. That would seem to indicate that women were being affected disproportionately by the current structural adjustment programmes. With regard to teenagers and contraception, the Government should refer to paragraphs 93 and 267 of the Beijing Platform for Action. She would also like to know whether, in the limited number of circumstances where abortions were legal, they were covered under the national health insurance scheme.

11. Ms. BARE urged the Government of Venezuela to continue its cooperation with non-governmental organizations; evidence abounded of their effectiveness in such areas as health care, legal literacy, and advocacy. In the next report, more information was needed on existing mechanisms for monitoring whether employers were meeting their legal obligations concerning equal pay for work of equal value, along with statistics on the number of violations reported.

12. Ms. MARTÍNEZ (Venezuela) said that the question of the low wages paid to women was very difficult because women themselves were sometimes prepared to accept lower wages than men so as to have employment; socio-cultural and economic factors came into play. The same considerations applied to the question of penalizing employers for paying low wages to women. The main challenge was to enhance women's self-esteem.

13. The proportion of the State budget allocated to health had been very low; recently doctors, including emergency room staff, had gone on strike to protest

against the lack of supplies and low salaries. The congress was currently considering the possibility of allocating 10 per cent of the State budget to the health sector.

14. While women had access to early detection services for uterine and breast cancer, they often failed to take advantage of them, preferring to go to traditional healers or to use herbal remedies. Greater educational efforts were needed in that respect.

15. An Independent Women's Institute would be established after the Equal Opportunities for Women Act was approved by Congress. The National Women's Council was promoting the establishment of the Institute, which would be an autonomous body.

16. Ms. GUZMAN (Venezuela) said that the Sectoral Office for the Advancement of Women had had no decision-making power, no organizational structure and no budget. The National Women's Council was promoting the establishment of a national mechanism that would be able to implement policies for women and would have its own budget and organizational structure, and would report directly to the Presidency, rather than being part of a ministry.

17. Ms. MARTÍNEZ said that she would make available to Ms. Bustelo García del Real a copy of the decree requiring that educational institutions should not dismiss girls who became pregnant.

18. Ms. SCHÖPP-SCHILLING said that she had been disturbed to hear that women themselves often accepted low wages; she hoped that that comment did not imply that women were being blamed for the situation, and that that attitude did not underlie policymaking in Venezuela. The reality was that, in many countries, neither private enterprises nor, in many cases, the public sector offered equal pay for equal work or work of comparable value; it was a structural element of both free market and socialist planned economics that women's work was exploited and was not valued either in the home or in the labour market. Under the Convention, it was the obligation of States parties to monitor the human rights situation of women in order to ensure that their work was not being exploited and that they received equal pay for equal work, and that efforts were undertaken to evaluate women's work in the labour market so as to address the problem of the usually lower wages in the feminized sectors.

The meeting rose at 4.15 p.m.